HATE

#4 **ANNUAL** **$4.95**

BY PETER BAGGE · FANTAGRAPHICS BOOKS · $7.50 IN CANADA

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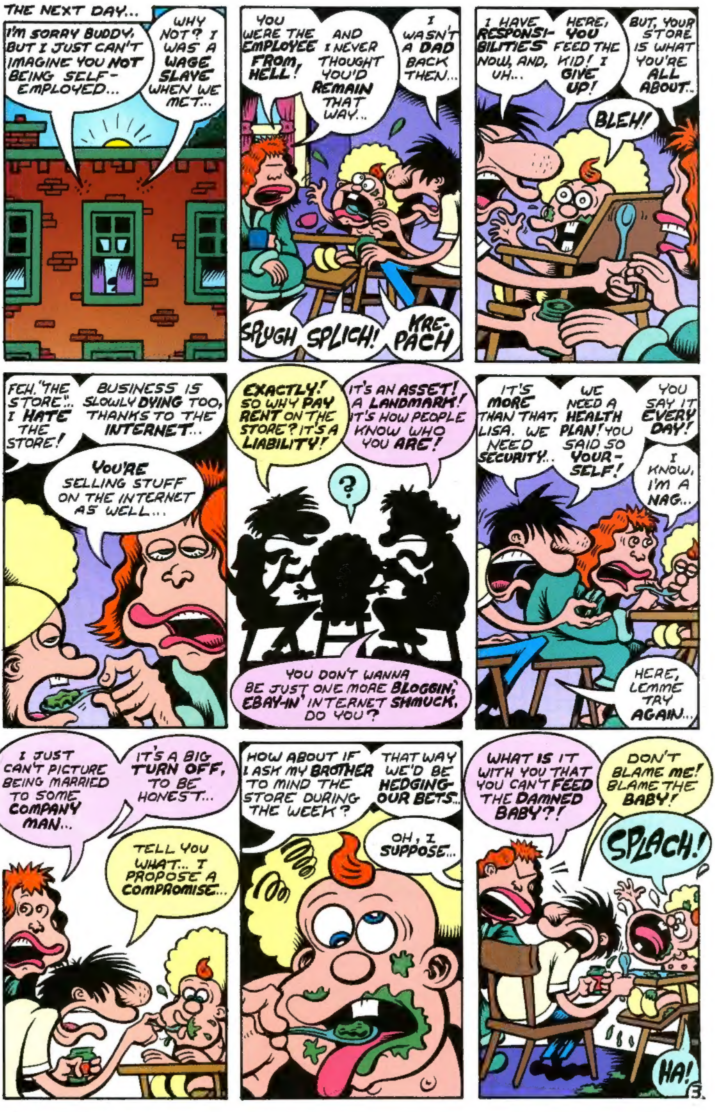
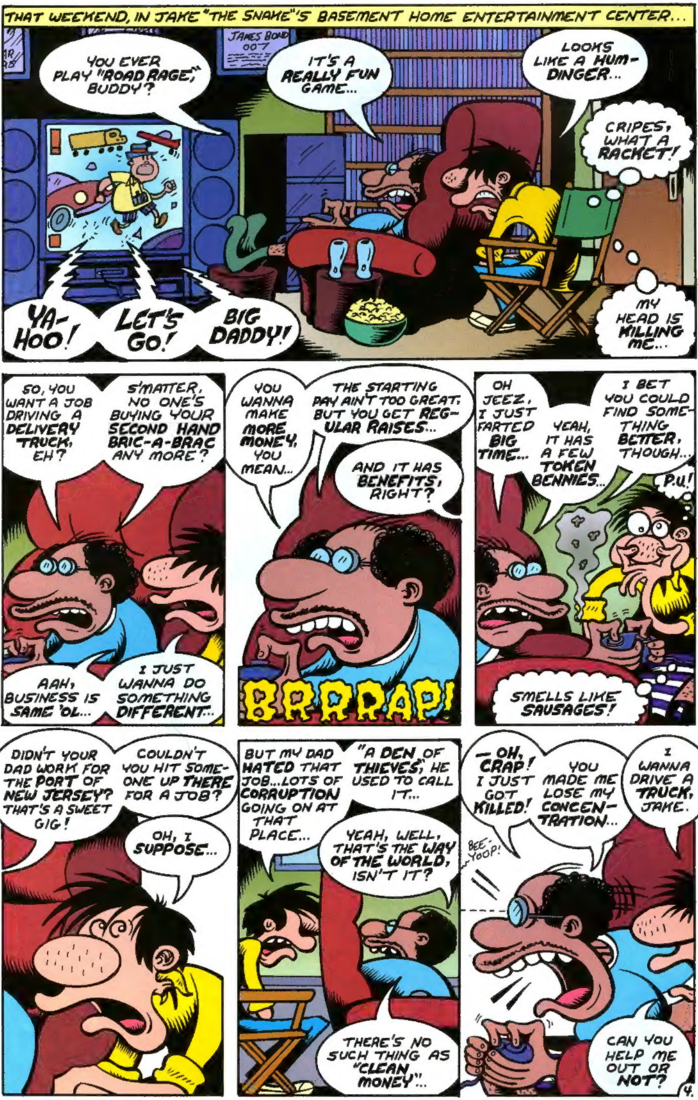
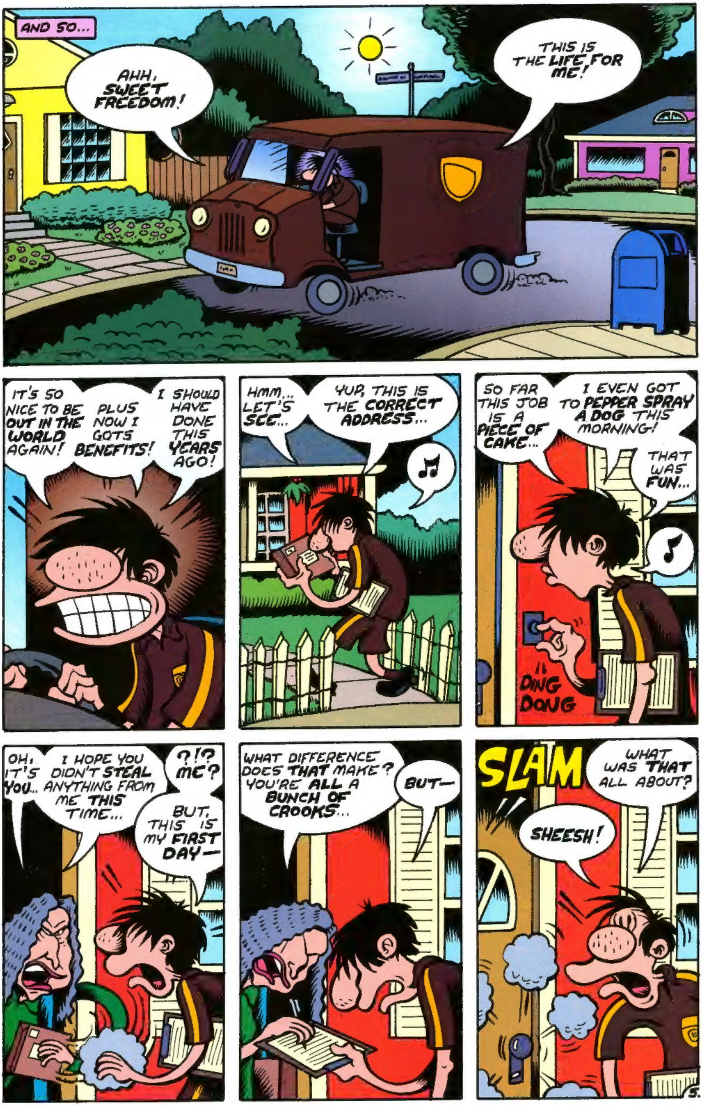
MINUTE'S LATER...
SHOP
MAE'S CAFE
WHY DID SHE GET SO INDIGNANT WHEN I ASKED IF I COULD BUY THAT OLD SHAKE-MAKER OFF OF HER?
I OFFERED GOOD MONEY FOR IT, TOO!
HEY, I ADMIRED HER FOR IT...
I'M SURPRISED YOU DIDN'T OFFER TO BUY HER, SINCE SHE'S PRETTY "VINT-AGE" HERSELF!
OPEN
MAE'S CAFE
I HEAR THIS THRIFT SHOP HAS A LOT OF OLD VINYL...
THOUGH IF IT'S THE USUAL PILE OF BARBRA STREI-SAND AND LIONEL RICHIE L.P.S I'M GONNA SCREAM...
I SHOULD'VE BROUGHT MY EAR PLUGS, THEN...
EEYAGHH!
Lionel Richie
DON'T YOU THINK THERE'S SOMETHING IN-HERENTLY UNHEALTHY ABOUT "COLLECTING"? I MEAN, WHAT PURPOSE DOES IT SERVE?
BEATS ME...
THERE SURE WAS SOMETHING INHERENTLY AWFUL ABOUT THE '80S, THOUGH...
IS IT JUST A WAY TO AVOID DEALING WITH REAL PROBLEMS? OR WITH OTHER PEOPLE? OR THE WORLD?
WHAT'S WRONG WITH AVOIDING PROBLEMS? IT'S ONE OF MY FAVORITE HOBBIES...
BESIDES, WHAT ARE YOU GONNA DO ABOUT IT? SELL YOUR OWN 2nd-HAND SHOP?
MAYBE.
—REALLY? ARE YOU SERIOUS?
YEAH, I AM, ACTUALLY...
OKAY, SO YOU SELL YOUR BUSINESS. THEN WHAT?
IF I HAD AN ANSWER TO THAT I WOULDN'T BE LUGGING THESE DUSTY OLD L.P.S RIGHT NOW...
WELL, WELL, GET A LOAD OF THE BIG SPENDERS!

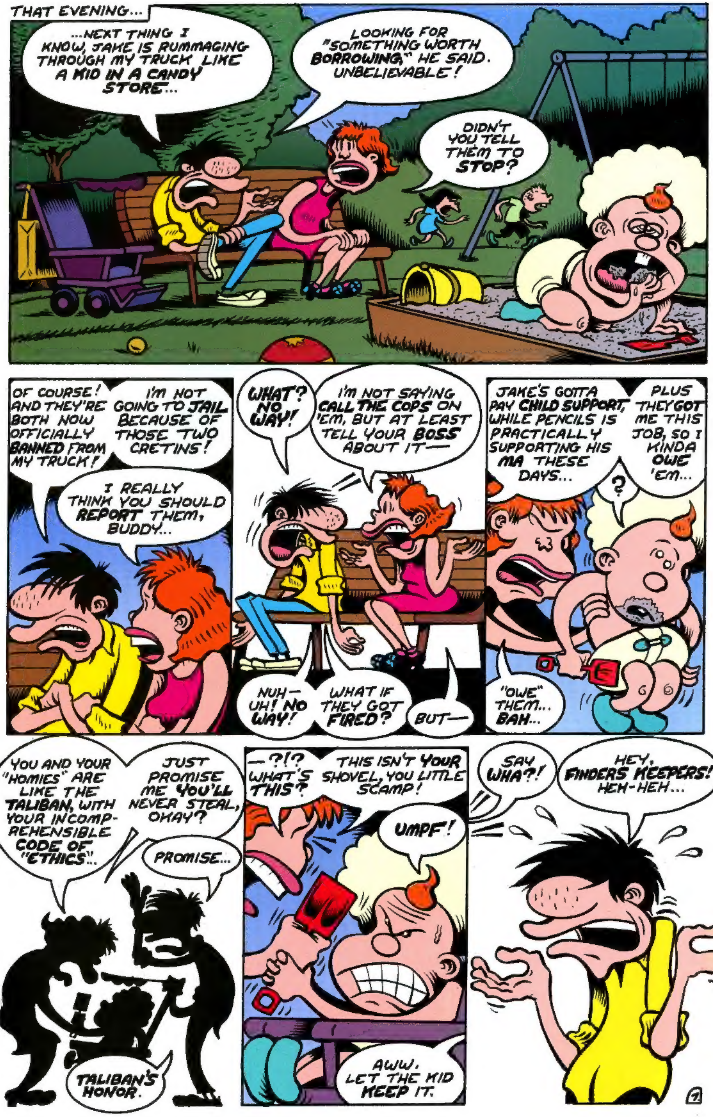


THE NEXT DAY...
I'M SORRY BUDDY, BUT I JUST CAN'T IMAGINE YOU NOT BEING SELF-EMPLOYED...
WHY NOT? I WAS A WAGE SLAVE WHEN WE MET...
YOU WERE THE EMPLOYEE FROM, HELL!
AND I NEVER THOUGHT YOU'D REMAIN THAT WAY...
I WASN'T A DAD BACK THEN...
SPLUGH
SPLICH!
KRE-PACH
I HAVE RESPONSI-BILITIES NOW, AND, UH...
HERE, YOU FEED THE KID! I GIVE UP!
BUT, YOUR STORE IS WHAT YOU'RE ALL ABOUT...
BLEH!
FEH. "THE STORE"... I HATE THE STORE!
BUSINESS IS SLOWLY DYING TOO, THANKS TO THE INTERNET...
YOU'RE SELLING STUFF ON THE INTERNET AS WELL...
EXACTLY! SO WHY PAY RENT ON THE STORE? IT'S A LIABILITY!
IT'S AN ASSET! A LANDMARK! IT'S HOW PEOPLE KNOW WHO YOU ARE!
?
YOU DON'T WANNA BE JUST ONE MORE BLOGGIN', EBAY-IN' INTERNET SHMUCK, DO YOU?
IT'S MORE THAN THAT, LISA. WE NEED SECURITY...
WE NEED A HEALTH PLAN! YOU SAID SO YOUR-SELF!
YOU SAY IT EVERY DAY!
I KNOW, I'M A NAG...
HERE, LEMME TRY AGAIN...
I JUST CAN'T PICTURE BEING MARRIED TO SOME COMPANY MAN...
IT'S A BIG TURN OFF, TO BE HONEST...
TELL YOU WHAT... I PROPOSE A COMPROMISE...
HOW ABOUT IF I ASK MY BROTHER TO MIND THE STORE DURING THE WEEK?
THAT WAY WE'D BE HEDGING OUR BETS...
OH, I SUPPOSE...
WHAT IS IT WITH YOU THAT YOU CAN'T FEED THE DAMNED BABY?!
DON'T BLAME ME! BLAME THE BABY!
SPLACH!
HA!
3

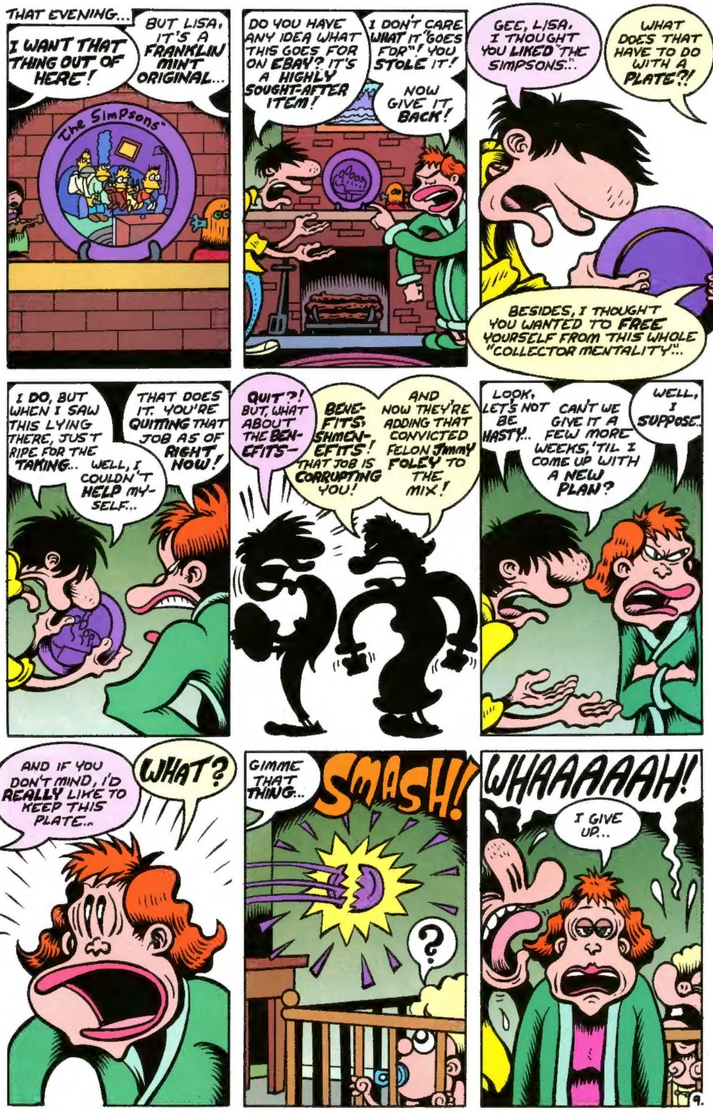

THAT WEEKEND, IN JAKE "THE SNAKE"'S BASEMENT HOME ENTERTAINMENT CENTER...
JAMES BOND 007
YOU EVER PLAY "ROAD RAGE," BUDDY?
IT'S A REALLY FUN GAME...
LOOKS LIKE A HUM-DINGER...
CRIPES, WHAT A RACKET!
YA-HOO!
LET'S GO!
BIG DADDY!
MY HEAD IS KILLING ME...
SO, YOU WANT A JOB DRIVING A DELIVERY TRUCK, EH?
S'MATTER, NO ONE'S BUYING YOUR SECOND HAND BRIC-A-BRAC ANY MORE?
AAH, BUSINESS IS SAME 'OL...
I JUST WANNA DO SOMETHING DIFFERENT...
YOU WANNA MAKE MORE MONEY, YOU MEAN...
THE STARTING PAY AIN'T TOO GREAT, BUT YOU GET REG-ULAR RAISES...
AND IT HAS BENEFITS, RIGHT?
BRRRAP!
OH JEEZ, I JUST FARTED BIG TIME...
YEAH, IT HAS A FEW TOKEN BENNIES...
I BET YOU COULD FIND SOME-THING BETTER, THOUGH...
P.U!
SMELLS LIKE SAUSAGES!
DIDN'T YOUR DAD WORK FOR THE PORT OF NEW JERSEY? THAT'S A SWEET GIG!
COULDN'T YOU HIT SOME-ONE UP THERE FOR A JOB?
OH, I SUPPOSE...
BUT MY DAD HATED THAT JOB...LOTS OF CORRUPTION GOING ON AT THAT PLACE...
"A DEN OF THIEVES," HE USED TO CALL IT...
YEAH, WELL, THAT'S THE WAY OF THE WORLD, ISN'T IT?
THERE'S NO SUCH THING AS "CLEAN MONEY"...
—OH, CRAP! I JUST GOT KILLED!
YOU MADE ME LOSE MY CONCEN-TRATION...
BEE-YOOP!
I WANNA DRIVE A TRUCK, JAKE.
CAN YOU HELP ME OUT OR NOT?


AND SO...
AHH, SWEET FREEDOM!
THIS IS THE LIFE FOR ME!
IT'S SO NICE TO BE OUT IN THE WORLD AGAIN!
PLUS NOW I GOTS BENEFITS!
I SHOULD HAVE DONE THIS YEARS AGO!
HMM... LET'S SEE...
YUP, THIS IS THE CORRECT ADDRESS...
SO FAR THIS JOB IS A PIECE OF CAKE...
I EVEN GOT TO PEPPER SPRAY A DOG THIS MORNING!
THAT WAS FUN...
DING DONG
OH, IT'S YOU...
I HOPE YOU DIDN'T STEAL ANYTHING FROM ME THIS TIME...
?!? ME?
BUT, THIS IS MY FIRST DAY—
WHAT DIFFERENCE DOES THAT MAKE? YOU'RE ALL A BUNCH OF CROOKS...
BUT—
SLAM
WHAT WAS THAT ALL ABOUT?
SHEESH!
5.

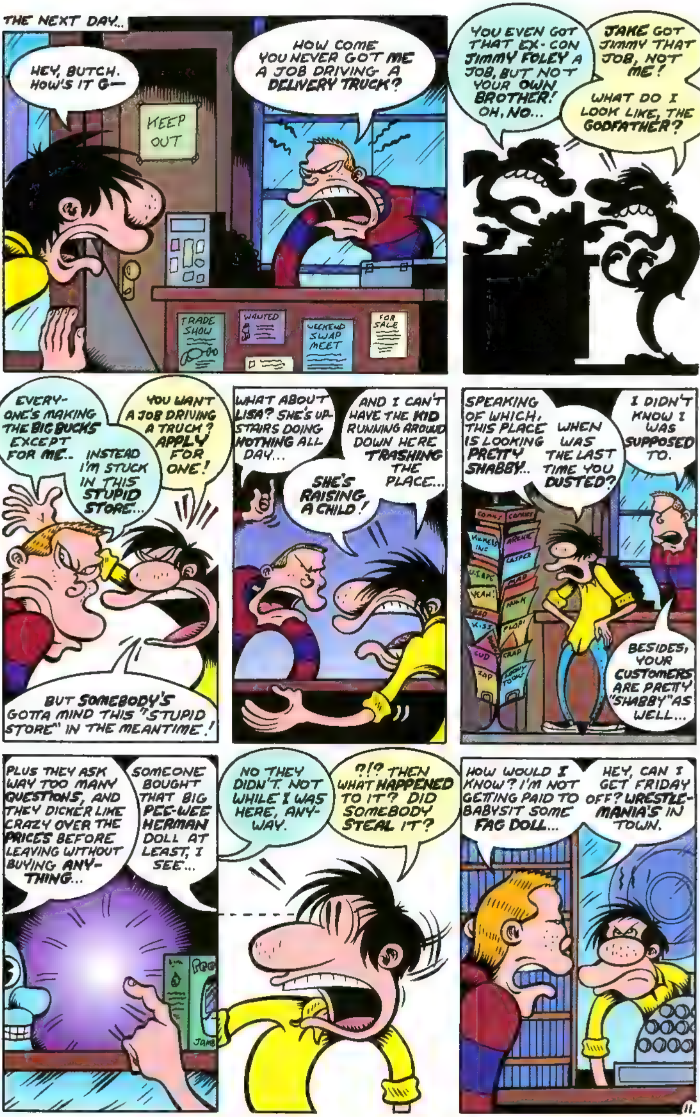
LATER THAT DAY...
HOW'S THE FIRST DAY ON THE JOB GOING, BUDDY?
IT STARTED OFF FINE, 'TIL THIS LADY GOT ALL UP IN MY FACE...
SHE ACCUSED ME OF STEALING, OF ALL THINGS.
WAS IT THE OLD HIPPIE LADY UP ON HILLMAN TERRACE?
!?! YEAH! BUT HOW DID YOU KNOW?
SHE RUNS A MAIL ORDER MUSHROOM GROWING BUSINESS, WHICH IS QUASI-LEGAL AT BEST...
SO WE HELP OURSELVES TO SOME OF HER WARES ON OCCASION, IN EXCHANGE FOR KEEPING QUIET...
YOU MEAN YOU HAVE AN "ARRANGEMENT" WITH HER?
ER... MORE LIKE AN "UN-DERSTANDING".
OH YEAH? SHE DIDN'T ACT VERY "UNDERSTANDING" TOWARDS ME...
HEY, YOU GOT A PACKAGE FROM DELL COMPUTERS IN HERE...
—HEY! BE CAREFUL WITH THAT—
OOPS!
SLIPPED.
SMASH!
OOH! A LAPTOP!
I COULD USE ONE OF THESE.
PUT THAT BACK! I STILL HAVE TO DELIVER THAT THING!
TOO LATE NOW. "DAMAGED GOODS". "UNDELIVERABLE." HEH-HEH!
"DUDE, YOU'RE GETTING A DELL." HA HA!

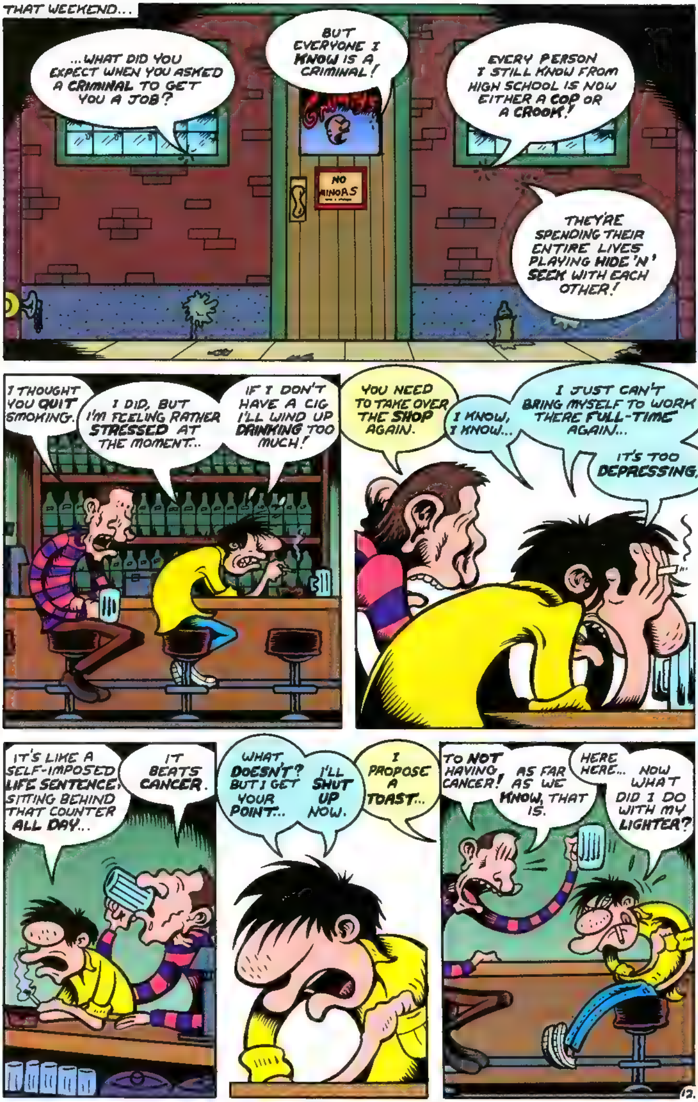

THAT EVENING...
...NEXT THING I KNOW, JAKE IS RUMMAGING THROUGH MY TRUCK LIKE A KID IN A CANDY STORE...
LOOKING FOR "SOMETHING WORTH BORROWING," HE SAID. UNBELIEVABLE!
DIDN'T YOU TELL THEM TO STOP?
OF COURSE! AND THEY'RE BOTH NOW OFFICIALLY BANNED FROM MY TRUCK!
I'M NOT GOING TO JAIL BECAUSE OF THOSE TWO CRETINS!
I REALLY THINK YOU SHOULD REPORT THEM, BUDDY...
WHAT? NO WAY!
I'M NOT SAYING CALL THE COPS ON 'EM, BUT AT LEAST TELL YOUR BOSS ABOUT IT—
NUH-UH! NO WAY!
WHAT IF THEY GOT FIRED?
BUT—
JAKE'S GOTTA PAY CHILD SUPPORT, WHILE PENCILS IS PRACTICALLY SUPPORTING HIS MA THESE DAYS...
PLUS THEY GOT ME THIS JOB, SO I KINDA OWE 'EM...
?
"OWE" THEM... BAH...
YOU AND YOUR "HOMIES" ARE LIKE THE TALIBAN, WITH YOUR INCOMPREHENSIBLE CODE OF "ETHICS"...
JUST PROMISE ME YOU'LL NEVER STEAL, OKAY?
PROMISE...
TALIBAN'S HONOR.
—?!? WHAT'S THIS?
THIS ISN'T YOUR SHOVEL, YOU LITTLE SCAMP!
UMPF!
AWW, LET THE KID KEEP IT.
SAY WHA?!
HEY, FINDERS KEEPERS! HEH-HEH...
7

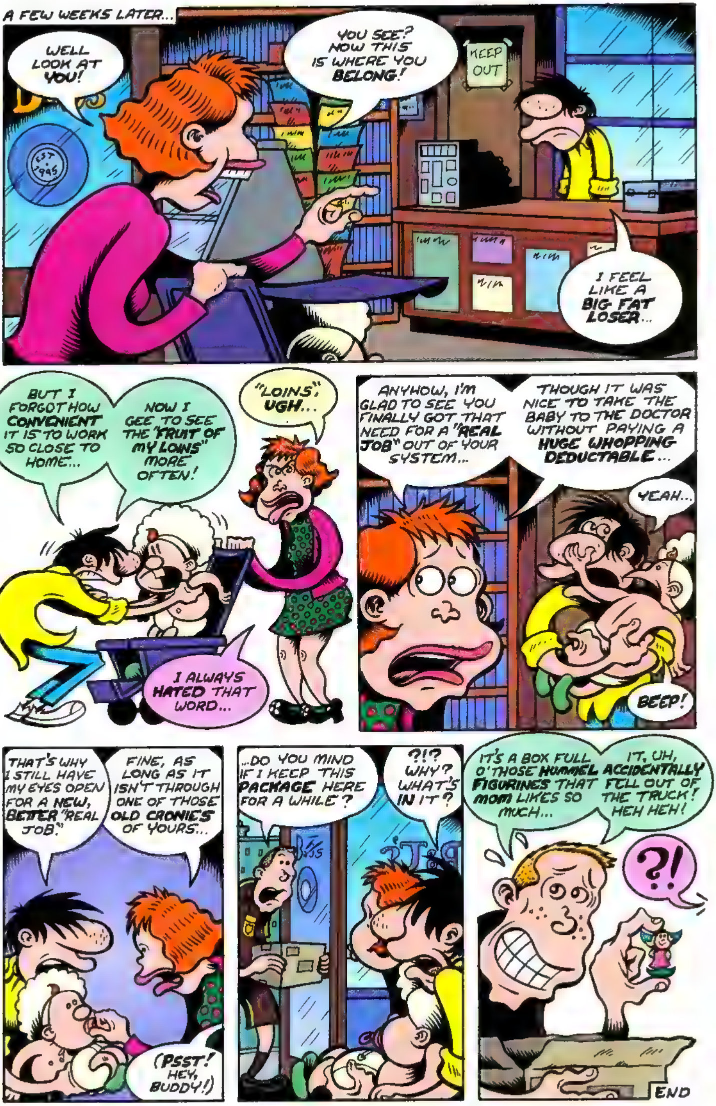
WEEKS LATER...
MISSED! MY TURN!
AWWW! LEMME TAKE ONE MORE WHACK AT IT!
SO, HOW IS IT THAT JIMMY FOLEY IS GONNA BE "SUBBING" FOR YOU, JAKE?
I THOUGHT HE WAS IN JAIL!
SWISH!
Bugles
HE'S IN A HALF-WAY HOUSE NOW...
BUT HE HAS TO WEAR ONE O' THEM ELECTRONIC ANKLE BRACELETS TO MAKE SURE HE DOESN'T STRAY...
OH., THAT'S, ER... GREAT.
GOOD GOD!
WE'RE JUST TRYING TO HELP HIM OUT, SINCE, YOU KNOW, WE OWE HIM...
WELL, SURE...
WE DO? WHY? HOW?
YOUR TURN, JAKE!
S-SAY, YOU GUYS, I, UH, REALLY DON'T THINK WE SHOULD BE PLAYING PIÑATA WITH THE MERCH...
WHY NOT?
IT'S MY TRUCK, BUDDY.
MY TRUCK: MY RULES!
I KNOW, BUT I THINK WE OUGHT TO CLEAN UP OUR ACT FOR JIMMY'S SAKE, WHAT WITH HIM BEING ON PAROLE AND ALL...
HMMM... YOU MAY HAVE A POINT... —OOF!
SMASH!
OOH! WHA'D WE GET?
FELLAHS, REALLY, I—
—?!? WHAT'S THIS?!
the Simpsons
HOME SWEET HOME

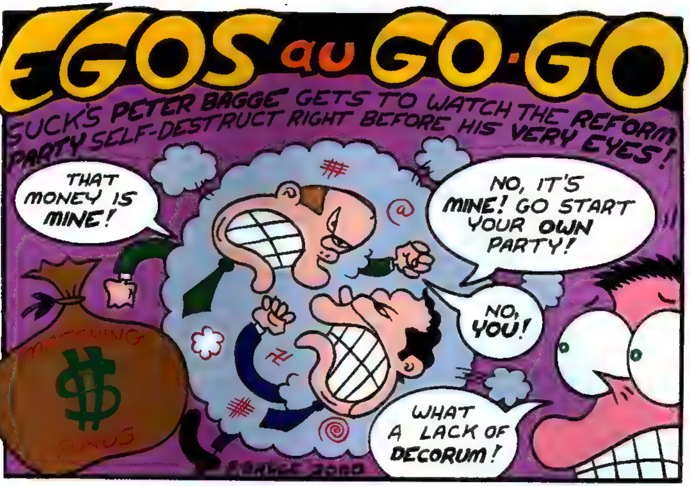

THAT EVENING...
I WANT THAT THING OUT OF HERE!
BUT LISA, IT'S A FRANKLIN MINT ORIGINAL...
The Simpsons
DO YOU HAVE ANY IDEA WHAT THIS GOES FOR ON EBAY? IT'S A HIGHLY SOUGHT-AFTER ITEM!
I DON'T CARE WHAT IT "GOES FOR"! YOU STOLE IT!
NOW GIVE IT BACK!
GEE, LISA, I THOUGHT YOU LIKED "THE SIMPSONS"...
WHAT DOES THAT HAVE TO DO WITH A PLATE?!
BESIDES, I THOUGHT YOU WANTED TO FREE YOURSELF FROM THIS WHOLE "COLLECTOR MENTALITY"...
I DO, BUT WHEN I SAW THIS LYING THERE, JUST RIPE FOR THE TAKING...
WELL, I, COULDN'T HELP MY-SELF...
THAT DOES IT. YOU'RE QUITTING THAT JOB AS OF RIGHT NOW!
QUIT?! BUT, WHAT ABOUT THE BENEFITS—
BENE-FITS, SHMEN-EFITS! THAT JOB IS CORRUPTING YOU!
AND NOW THEY'RE ADDING THAT CONVICTED FELON JIMMY FOLEY TO THE MIX!
LOOK, LET'S NOT BE HASTY...
CAN'T WE GIVE IT A FEW MORE WEEKS, 'TIL I COME UP WITH A NEW PLAN?
WELL, I SUPPOSE...
AND IF YOU DON'T MIND, I'D REALLY LIKE TO KEEP THIS PLATE...
WHAT?
GIMME THAT THING...
SMASH!
?
WHAAAAAAH!
I GIVE UP...
9.

THE FOLLOWING WEEK...
SO, WHAT'S YOUR BROTHER UP TO THESE DAYS, BUDDY?
BUTCH? NOT MUCH...
THESE DAYS HE'S JUST MINDING MY STORE FOR ME...
OH YEAH? YOU GUYS PARTNERS NOW?
"PARTNERS"? HARDLY...
THOUGH HE IS GETTING FREE ROOM AND BOARD OUT OF THE DEAL...
THAT'S IT? YOU'RE NOT EVEN PAYING HIM?
WHY DON'T YOU GET HIM A JOB WITH US?
YEAH!
WHAT? NO WAY!
LOOK, I NEED SOMEONE TO WATCH THE STORE...
YEAH, FOR NO MONEY.
AT LEAST THIS GIG PAYS.
YEAH, BUDDY! WHAT KIND OF A BROTHER ARE YOU, ANYWAY?
LOOK MAN, WHERE WOULD WE ALL BE IF WE DIDN'T HELP OUT OUR "HOMIES", YA KNOW?
I'LL, UH, MENTION IT TO HIM...
NICE DO-RAG, "HOMIE".
SMASH!!
—HEY! WHAT THE HELL ARE YOU DOING?!
IT SLIPPED! HEH-HEH!
OH, GREAT! THAT'S ALL I NEED, IS TO GET THROWN BACK IN THE SLAMMER BECAUSE OF YOU!
S-SORRY, JIMMY! OLD HABITS DIE HARD, I GUESS...
WAIT— IS THAT A LASER PRINTER?
WE COULD USE ONE OF THOSE AT THE HALFWAY HOUSE...
HERE, TAKE IT! I HAVE DOZENS AL-READY!
SOME-BODY CALL THE COPS!
10.


THE NEXT DAY...
HEY, BUTCH. HOW'S IT G—
HOW COME YOU NEVER GOT ME A JOB DRIVING A DELIVERY TRUCK?
KEEP OUT
TRADE SHOW
WANTED
WEEKEND SWAP MEET
FOR SALE
YOU EVEN GOT THAT EX-CON JIMMY FOLEY A JOB, BUT NOT YOUR OWN BROTHER! OH, NO...
JAKE GOT JIMMY THAT JOB, NOT ME!
WHAT DO I LOOK LIKE, THE GODFATHER?
EVERY-ONE'S MAKING THE BIG BUCKS EXCEPT FOR ME..
INSTEAD I'M STUCK IN THIS STUPID STORE...
YOU WANT A JOB DRIVING A TRUCK? APPLY FOR ONE!
BUT SOMEBODY'S GOTTA MIND THIS "STUPID STORE" IN THE MEANTIME!
WHAT ABOUT LISA? SHE'S UP-STAIRS DOING NOTHING ALL DAY...
AND I CAN'T HAVE THE KID RUNNING AROUND DOWN HERE TRASHING THE PLACE...
SHE'S RAISING A CHILD!
SPEAKING OF WHICH, THIS PLACE IS LOOKING PRETTY SHABBY...
WHEN WAS THE LAST TIME YOU DUSTED?
I DIDN'T KNOW I WAS SUPPOSED TO.
BESIDES, YOUR CUSTOMERS ARE PRETTY "SHABBY" AS WELL...
PLUS THEY ASK WAY TOO MANY QUESTIONS, AND THEY DICKER LIKE CRAZY OVER THE PRICES BEFORE LEAVING WITHOUT BUYING ANY-THING...
SOMEONE BOUGHT THAT BIG PEE-WEE HERMAN DOLL AT LEAST, I SEE...
NO THEY DIDN'T. NOT WHILE I WAS HERE, ANY-WAY.
?!? THEN WHAT HAPPENED TO IT? DID SOMEBODY STEAL IT?
HOW WOULD I KNOW? I'M NOT GETTING PAID TO BABYSIT SOME FAG DOLL...
HEY, CAN I GET FRIDAY OFF? WRESTLE-MANIA'S IN TOWN.


THAT WEEKEND...
...WHAT DID YOU EXPECT WHEN YOU ASKED A CRIMINAL TO GET YOU A JOB?
BUT EVERYONE I KNOW IS A CRIMINAL!
EVERY PERSON I STILL KNOW FROM HIGH SCHOOL IS NOW EITHER A COP OR A CROOK!
THEY'RE SPENDING THEIR ENTIRE LIVES PLAYING HIDE 'N' SEEK WITH EACH OTHER!
NO MINORS
I THOUGHT YOU QUIT SMOKING.
I DID, BUT I'M FEELING RATHER STRESSED AT THE MOMENT...
IF I DON'T HAVE A CIG I'LL WIND UP DRINKING TOO MUCH!
YOU NEED TO TAKE OVER THE SHOP AGAIN.
I KNOW, I KNOW...
I JUST CAN'T BRING MYSELF TO WORK THERE FULL-TIME AGAIN...
IT'S TOO DEPRESSING...
IT'S LIKE A SELF-IMPOSED LIFE SENTENCE, SITTING BEHIND THAT COUNTER ALL DAY...
IT BEATS CANCER.
WHAT DOESN'T? BUT I GET YOUR POINT...
I'LL SHUT UP NOW.
I PROPOSE A TOAST...
TO NOT HAVING CANCER!
AS FAR AS WE KNOW, THAT IS.
HERE HERE...
NOW WHAT DID I DO WITH MY LIGHTER?

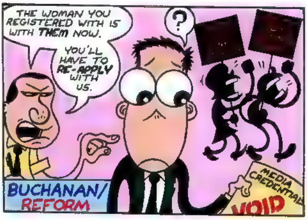

A FEW WEEKS LATER...
WELL LOOK AT YOU!
YOU SEE? NOW THIS IS WHERE YOU BELONG!
KEEP OUT
EST. 1995
I FEEL LIKE A BIG FAT LOSER...
BUT I FORGOT HOW CONVENIENT IT IS TO WORK SO CLOSE TO HOME...
NOW I GET TO SEE THE "FRUIT OF MY LOINS" MORE OFTEN!
"LOINS", UGH...
I ALWAYS HATED THAT WORD...
ANYHOW, I'M GLAD TO SEE YOU FINALLY GOT THAT NEED FOR A "REAL JOB" OUT OF YOUR SYSTEM...
THOUGH IT WAS NICE TO TAKE THE BABY TO THE DOCTOR WITHOUT PAYING A HUGE WHOPPING DEDUCTABLE...
YEAH...
BEEP!
THAT'S WHY I STILL HAVE MY EYES OPEN FOR A NEW, BETTER "REAL JOB."
FINE, AS LONG AS IT ISN'T THROUGH ONE OF THOSE OLD CRONIE'S OF YOURS...
(PSST! HEY, BUDDY!)
...DO YOU MIND IF I KEEP THIS PACKAGE HERE FOR A WHILE?
?!? WHY? WHAT'S IN IT?
IT'S A BOX FULL O' THOSE HUMMEL FIGURINES THAT MOM LIKES SO MUCH...
IT, UH, ACCIDENTALLY FELL OUT OF THE TRUCK! HEH HEH!
?!
END



What IS this thing?

I agreed to cover the Reform Party Convention (the party founded by 2 time presidential contender Ross Perot) in Long Beach, CA this past August mainly as a side show to the Main Event, that being the Democratic National Convention in Downtown LA later that same week. I had no great expectations that this Reform Con would be anything other than a (hopefully) amusing freak show, but it suddenly was shaping up to be much more than that, since the day before the convention officially started the wire services were full of reports of a huge rift between rival factions within the party itself — that FIGHTS were breaking out, even! A regular donnybrook! So instead of dreading this assignment I now couldn't wait to get my ass down there — though I was gonna need a score card (as you will too as you read this) to keep track of all the egomaniacs involved in this melee!

It turns out that a rebel faction of the Reform Party had a candidate of their own to rally around in the form of former two-time "Natural Law" Party Presidential candidate and Harvard-trained physicist John Hagelin. Hagelin seemed to be posing a serious threat to TV pundit (and party interloper) Pat Buchanan's nomination to head the Reform ticket, which caused the Buchananites to panic. In order to secure the nomination, Pat's followers began a campaign of alleged "dirty tricks" to block any chance of Hagelin securing the nomination. This included the "disqualification" of any and all convention delegates who DIDN'T support Buchanan, which is what lead to a big brouhaha at the start of the convention

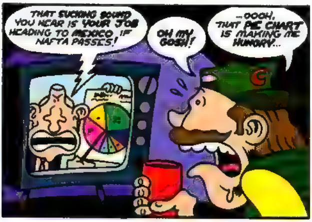


Buchanan's critics do seem to have a well-founded and well-documented case against him, though the reasons behind it may not be as simple as Hagelin's more spirited supporters make them out to be. According to the socialist-leaning former Independence Party candidate (and a highly unlikely — albeit short lived — supporter of Pat's Reform candidacy) Dr. Lenora Fulani, it was ALL ABOUT THE MONEY — namely, a cool $12.6 million in

federal "matching funds": free dough that is routinely given away to the major party candidates (the result of some post-Watergate attempt at "campaign finance reform").

Dr. Fulani herself once received over $1 million in matching funds while running for President as an "Independent" back in 1988, so she's an old pro at how to toot your own horn on the public's dime. More recently, the Reform Party has qualified for this taxpayer-funded windfall thanks to Ross Perot's 8% or more showing in the last two presidential elections.

For those of you who have forgotten or never really cared: The "Reform Party" was formed as a vehicle for Texas Billionaire Ross Perot to launch his own presidential campaign back in 1992. His emphasis was on "good government," which struck a populist nerve at the time (especially when it came to the federal deficit, a serious issue that both major party candidates where trying to ignore, thereby leaving the door wide open for Perot's candidacy), as well as his personal wealth enabled him to get his message across to the American public via a series of now legendary pie-chart laden "infomercials."



After initially posing what briefly looked like a serious threat to WIN the election, Ross soon began to wither under the bright lights of the Press, who successfully painted him as a "nut-job" (a tag that is inevitably bestowed upon to ALL third party candidates). Perot also did himself no favors by obsessing over such pet issues as MIAs and POWs — as well as taking a stand against Free Trade, which most Americans support in spite of the supposed threat it poses to the number of mind-numbing and/or dangerous blue collar jobs that fewer and fewer people in this country WANT, let alone NEED to take (although one Buchanan delegate warned me that once the economy goes sour "we're gonna wish we had those jobs back!" Such optimism! We'd all better start honing our hunting and gathering skills as soon as possible!)

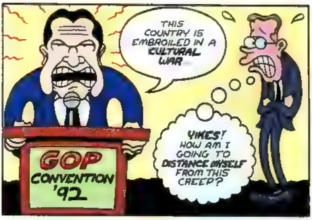
Meanwhile, former Reagan White House aide, Nixon speech writer, CNN (now FOX) Commentator and conservative columnist Pat Buchanan was making his OWN run on the Presidency in both '92 and '96, only as a candidate for the Republican Party ticket. Like Perot, Buchanan believes in a "Fortress America" — meaning less foreign military intervention, as well as stricter immigration laws and higher trade tariffs — and this anti-"New World Order" stance gave him surprisingly strong support in the early primaries.

Unlike Ross, however, Pat also makes a lot of noise about such moral issues as abortion and gay rights, and this aspect of his schtick wound up turning off a lot of would-be supporters, especially after his infamous "cultural war" speech at the 1992 Republican National Convention — which, in spite of its intended "reclaiming of traditional values" theme still scared the bejesus out of anyone who WASN'T an American-born white Christian straight person, while even horrifying a lot of them as well! (Buchanan always seems to be frightening or offending people he claims he doesn't intend to frighten or offend.)

That speech also helped to torpedo George Bush Sr.'s re-election bid, which exacerbated the animosity that already existed between the uncompromising Buchanan and the eternally compromised Bush Sr

Once Ross Perot made it official that he would NOT be running for President in the 2000 election, most Reformers' eyes turned to the former pro wrestler Jesse Ventura as Ross's heir apparent as the Reform Party standard bearer. Jesse was an obvious choice, since as Governor of Minnesota he held the highest office of any Reform Party member in the country Plus EVERYONE knew who Jesse was: The guy had name-recognition and "momentum" to spare at the time!

If only things were so simple First of all, Ross Perot HATES Ventura, for reasons that no one can accurately explain (Jealousy, perhaps? Fear of success?). Then there's the fact that Jesse simply didn't want to run for President, but in order to exert his influence



within the party he threw his support behind the smug New York real estate tycoon Donald Trump, of all people!

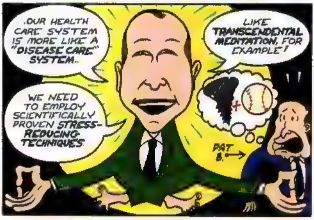
Perot and others were understandably horrified at the thought of "The Donald" fronting their ticket, so when Buchanan threw his hat in the ring the more conservative members of the Reform Party eagerly got behind him as a way to frustrate the Libertarian-leaning Ventura. Jesse, meanwhile, was equally horrified at the thought of Buchanan heading the party's ticket (figuring — correctly — that Pat would ignore the party's policy of avoiding social issues), so he quit the party altogether. Sheesh!

Anyone got any pairs of EXTRA LARGE DIAPERS for these fellahs?

Now, why would a life-long GOP member like Buchanan suddenly leave his party to join an embroiled mess like the Reform Party? Pat himself claims that George W. Bush's inevitable 2000 nomination was the final straw. Others claim it's his Last Hurrah a way to make his voice heard and influence felt right up to Election Day, so that even if he doesn't win he still can help get America "back on track," and secure his legacy as our country's "savior."

Still others (myself included) feel that, while not discounting all of the above, he succumbed to the allure of that accursed $12.6 million in matching funds. And Pat wasn't the only carpetbagger to succumb to the lure of this money...

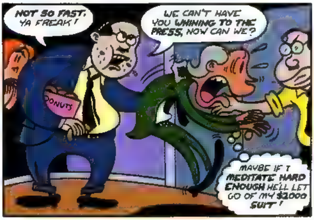
John Hagelin has run for President twice on the "Natural Law Party" ticket (he was their candidate in 2000 as well), but that didn't stop this organic food-loving, TM-practicing "President of The University of World Peace"(?!?) from also throwing his hat into the Reform Party ring. Like ALL Reformers, he thinks the Federal government has been corrupted by "special interests" — although in his case it's the FDA and their approval of IRRADIATED FOOD that gets his dander up, while it's the Department of Education and the NEA that gets Pat all in a tizzy.



And then there's always CAMPAIGN FINANCE REFORM for all these outraged third party folks to agree on. Hey, let's ALL run for President! TWELVE POINT SIX MILLION DOLLARS IN "MATCHING FUNDS" FOR EVERYBODY!! WHOOPIE!!!

A miniature version of Buchanan's "Cultural War" was in full effect at the Reform Party convention, what with Hagelin's more liberal leaning, well dressed, college educated, low-body-fat TM practitioners at hopeless odds with Pat's "brigade" of God-fearing, fried chicken-loving redneck xenophobes. In fact, the Hagelin camp had already declared Buchanan "disqualified" in a press release weeks before the convention for his suspicious vote-collecting practices. There was NO WAY these two groups were going to band together and effectively support the same candidate, and both parties-within-the-party knew it. One side would have to give, and if you knew Pat as well as his hard-assed sister and campaign treasurer "Bay" Buchanan — you knew it WASN'T going to be him.

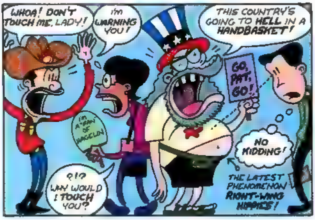
Using old style inner-city precinct ward tactics such as BALLOT STUFFING and PHYSICAL INTIMIDATION (the stuff that helped get JFK elected, in other words), the Buchananites tried to squeeze out all Hagelin delegates before the convention even started. The Buchanan backing party chairman Gerry Moan allegedly made up rules and procedures at will — much to the horror of the "Robert's Rules" abiding Hagelinites — during a closed door debate over the "credential-ing" of delegates, during which the Press was forbidden to enter and Hagelin supporters were forbidden to leave!



This near-riot (or "tiff," as Pat preferred to call it) was followed by the permanent separation of the two groups. Mingling meant risking a PUNCH IN THE NOSE for the next few days! Now that they were separated, it was impossible not to notice the HUGE difference between the two candidates' supporters. Buchanan had the larger crowd, being the bigger "star" of the two and all. Plus he had the original, larger convention venue at his disposal, which was looking mighty depopulated once much of the press realized that no more fisticuffs would be taking place. And try as they might to make it seem like this was the convention of a viable and "unified" third party, even the dumbest of Pat's supporters could sense that something rather... UNSEEMLY had just occurred....

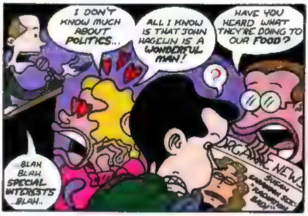
And "dumb" is the first word that comes to mind when meeting most of Pat's sheep-like "Brigade." These people seem to be of the type who wander through life like a blank slate, waiting for someone (like, say, Pat Buchanan) to come along and imbue their lives with some sense of meaning or importance. In this case that "importance" is that they're born and raised in AMERICA, from America's HEARTLAND — as if hailing from Missouri is some sort of an accomplishment, to hold over the head of someone who

made the "mistake" of being born in some impoverished shithole like Cambodia.



And try as Pat might to distance himself from the more "radical" right wing types, a lot of his supporters' racism is quite palpable. Their biggest concern by far is illegal immigrants from Mexico — who they sincerely believe are deliberately trying to reverse the outcome of the Mexican War. They even presented me with a lot of "documentation" to back up their claims. According to them, Pat Buchanan is the only candidate who's trying to prevent this territorial shift from happening, but seeing how poorly he's doing in the polls I'd suggest that all you folks in Walnut Creek better start brushing up on your Spanish!

Not surprisingly, I felt much more comfortable in the company of the "Rebel" (or "Real," as they prefer to be called) Reform Party people, who were far more open-minded and articulate. I also appreciated that they DIDN'T dress up in garish red, white and blue Uncle Sam-type get-ups to "prove" that they love our



country the absolute most-est of all I also was initially confused as to why the mainstream press kept painting their candidate, John Hagelin, as a "Maharishi-following kook," since none of the press material or platform statements the Hagelinites handed me mentioned TM anywhere, although further research into the Natural Law Party later revealed that the press's characterization of him was quite accurate. And while the long-time Reform Party members in the rebel camp were obsessed with winning their party back, the Natural Law folks who followed the eerily mild-mannered Hagelin into the Reform Party seemed every bit as cultish in their devotion to their Man as the Buchananites are to Pat. He's like the white-robed "great leader" of some sci-fi Utopian Society, the kind who says things like: "Why would you want to leave us? We have everything you need right here!"

The last two days of the convention were rather uneventful — except for Buchanan's surprising choice of a running mate: A BLACK FEMALE right-wing activist from Los Angeles named Ezola Foster. This news threw many of Pat's backers for a loop at first: partly because few of them had even HEARD of her, but also because this seemed like the same type of "inclusiveness" posturing that everyone (including the Reformers) had been deriding the Republicans for during their "we've got colored people in our party too!" convention a few weeks earlier in Philadelphia.

Even I had to wonder where this Ezola woman suddenly materialized from, since prior to her nomination I didn't see one single NON-white person amongst the Buchanan crowd. Did they call Rent-a-Negro? Yet there she was, waving and smiling and being as African-American as you please.

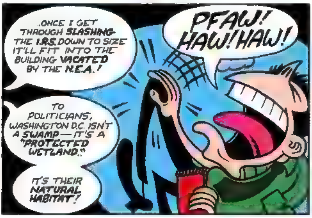
Once they got a taste of Ms. Foster's rhetoric, however, the Buchananites fell madly in love with her. How could they not, since she's even MORE conservative, flag-loving and God-fearing than all of them put together! She also was quite photogenic, and persuasive speaker to boot, like a black Dr. Laura — or a female Alan Keyes, to be more precise

Yet while I don't doubt that any of her stated convictions are sincere, her record — which includes a membership in the John Birch Society, and even defending the police who beat up Rodney King — seems to go way beyond mere conservatism, or even some kind of self-hatred. It's more like a deliberate, spiteful DEFIANCE of traditional "black leaders" - as if her main goal in life is to piss off her own congresswoman Maxine Waters!

Meanwhile, the once pumped-up Hagelin camp was now noticeably running out of steam. In spite of their best efforts, they couldn't seem to dissociate Buchanan from the Reform Party in the public's eye, and as a result their rhetoric became less pro-Hagelin and more anti-Buchanan. In other words, they were starting to sound like a bunch of whiney LOSERS.

They also blew a golden opportunity of one-upping Buchanan's vice presidential pick by nominating a Black Woman VP of their own in the form of Dr. Fulani. The press would have undoubtedly had a field day comparing and contrasting these two charismatic "soul sisters," who in spite of their shared skin color completely disagree on almost every major issue! They could have even pushed for a televised debate between the two, which would have brought some much-needed public attention to the Reform Party in general

But instead of showing any imagination at all the Hagelinites totally sold out by going with this boring Silicon Valley millionaire (and TM practitioner, natch!) named Nat Goldhaber — whom one delegate introduced as "another Ross Perot," in obvious reference to his sizable and much needed bank account. BLECHHH!!!



The highlight of this entire dual-convention was Pat Buchanan's much anticipated acceptance speech. Needless to say

his hand-picked delegates were in a fever pitch since this was the moment they had all been waiting for, and Pat did not disappoint

Making a grand entrance behind a band of Celtic bagpipe players, Pat then delivered the most entertaining and flat-out FUNNIEST political speech I've ever heard in my life I was in stitches! Not that I agree with him — in fact, except for his smaller government and less military intervention stances I disagree with him on almost everything — but the guy sure knows how to win over a crowd, make his case, AND deliver a punchline. It makes me wonder why he's wasting his time running for President at all — he should be starring in his own sitcom!

In the end this entire convention (or conventions) seemed like a sad, cynical charade, in which two "little kings" try to pretend to be major contenders, when all they really did is shore up and enrich their petty little fiefdoms. Neither of these candidates even BELONGED to The Reform Party one year ago, yet here they are fighting for center stage and the free moolah that goes with it, while in effect splitting the party in two. Some state governors who were too disinterested even to hear out each side's arguments pulled names out of a BOWL, lottery-style, to see which one would get to represent The Reform Party in their state! How hilariously humiliating!

So it was with great delight that I watched that $12 6 million of OUR money held up in court as these two doofuses fought over who would get it, knowing that by the time either of them did get it it'll be too late to do them any good. While The Hagelin camp may technically deserve the money, their naiveté over what a political campaign is really all about (not to mention their barely concealed greed) made them as morally un-deserving of those matching funds as the Buchananites were

What's even more ironic is that the one issue both sides agree upon is the need to take money OUT OF political campaigns, via "campaign finance reform," yet here they are putting on a clinic as to just how impossible that concept is Politics is ALL ABOUT Money, and always has been And so what? It's just a plain ol' fact of life. So DEAL WITH IT, you "Reformers"! •

ADDENDUM: The FEC eventually ruled that PAT BUCHANAN was the legitimate Reform Party candidate, and thus is entitled to the matching funds What's makes this decision even more amazing is that it came the day after ROSS PEROT himself declared that Buchanan's rivals represent the true Reform Party, and that Buchanan was an "impostor"! The Hagelinites dropped their appeal nonetheless, so the money went to Buchanan, who went on to make a dismal showing in the 2000 elections, while insuring that the Reform party WON'T receive any matching funds in 2004. Way to go, Pat!

SWIMMING IN SHIT AND LOVING IT!

THE ANONYMOUS GENIUSES BEHIND THE RECENT TEEN POP MUSIC CRAZE

By Peter Bagge

(Note: parts of the following originally appeared in a slightly different form in the British music magazine MOJO *in late 2002. — PB)*

Trend Predictors are declaring once again that the recent five or so year domination of teenybopper pop music is now finally, officially over — the official reason being that the Western World post-9/11 has no use for such trite nonsense — and as 2002 draws to a close, they may actually be correct for once, what with the complete takeover (stateside, at least) of hip-hop (though why the post-9/11 world suddenly has a NEED for Hip-Hop is never discussed). However, this turn of events ignores two simple facts: One is that so-called "bubblegum" music never completely goes away, since pre-teens always have and always will buy music that appeals to them. The other is that the recent teen pop music explosion had less to do with demographics and trends than it did with the fact that so much of it was SO GOOD — and this also had less to do (in my opinion) with the interchangeable stars and EVERYTHING to do with the writers and producers who wrote these songs.

In many ways, the more recent wave of teen pop music that started in the mid-1990s mirrored the Bubble Gum craze of the late-'60s–early-'70s back when the term bubblegum was first coined (as a way to separate it from the rest of what had come to be known as "rock" music, since prior to 1967 ALL rock music was considered greasy kid stuff), and even SURPASSED it terms of market dominance and overall sales. Besides the fact that both eras received little or no critical acclaim or credit, they also are similar in that the real talent behind it, namely the writers and producers of these timeless million sellers, where largely anonymous both then and now. Most people have never heard of Joey "Yummy Yummy" Levine or Jeff "Sugar Sugar" Barry, though they've heard their compositions and even their own singing voices countless times over.

It also wasn't a result of some cruel and calculating market strategy that acts like the Spice Girls so rapidly supplanted all the Indie rock music from the charts. The truth is that the latter simply had worn out its welcome, especially since all that self-pitying whining had no business existing in the post-cold war, economically robust mid-'90s. That "Wannabe" could have been such a massive hit in spite of enormous resistance and unabashed hatred and resentment from much of the pop music establishment also could not be entirely attributed to The Spice Girls' belly shirts, since that song STILL sends pre-teens into paroxysms of ecstasy, while remaining totally unaware that Ginger Spice's sequined hot pants — or even Ginger Spice herself — ever existed. In other words, it simply was, and remains, a great record.

Yet few people have ever heard of Richard Stannard and Matt Rowe, who both wrote and produced "Wannabe" and many other SG tunes. Or that they've both worked on hit recordings before and since. And if you type their names into a Google word search you will turn up next to nothing. And if you try to contact them through their agents, like I have, you will get a form email saying they — or any other producing/songwriting act represented by their agency, Native 19, who represents nearly every hit-maker-for-hire of note in the UK — do not give interviews, period. Ever. To anyone. "Cheers!"

Which makes one wonder: do these writer/producers PREFER it this way? Or is this strictly the result of a deal they struck with the devil (the "devils" in this case being the likes of Lou Pearlman and Simon Fuller) in return for having the privilege of working with their carefully groomed performers, and the royalties that come with such an "honor." Or perhaps both.

Then again, take the strange case of the Swedish hit-machine Max Martin, who is by far the best known and most successful of this breed. The fact is that he was by every measure the most successful songwriter and record producer of the 1990s (and beyond) yet STILL isn't a household name is astounding until one considers that he clearly prefers it that way, since he clearly has more than enough clout not to have his agency decide for him who he is or isn't allowed to speak to, yet he remains notoriously low key and reclusive.

Martin's combination of commercial success and mysterious reputation, along with his signature and oft-imitated "sound," makes it easy to compare him to Phil Spector. Yet I've ▶

also always considered Spector to be somewhat over-rated, in that I've always found Spector's famed "wall of sound" a bit too layered and overdone, and thus drawing too much attention to itself, and the same tends to be true of Martin's music. As a result, many of my personal favorite current writer/producers are unknown even among this breed of unknowns. Like Martin, an amazing bulk of them are Scandinavian, and all of them still adhere heavily to the happy-go-lucky Euro-Pop sound perfected decades ago by ABBA (even though a surprising number of them, also like Martin, cut their musical teeth in Heavy Metal bands, or were long-time "rave" DJs).

I recently, miracle of miracles, managed to score an email interview with one of my personal favorites, Fredrik Thomander (see sidebar), who with his partner Anders Wikstrom form the production team "Epicentre." His responses revealed a very pragmatic, workman-like and ego-less approach to his craft, so that rather than enlightening me he mostly CONFIRMED what was already obvious about the make-up of these musical hitmen-for-hire. Our conversation also suggested that I ought not continue to waste my time trying to contact any of his peers, since they obviously would rather be left alone as they toil away at home in their bathrobes and cash their massive royalty checks far from the glare of the public's eye. So instead I've simply listed a brief sampling of some of my personal favorite pop practitioners and recommend some of their work, in the hopes that the some aged and jaded readers of this publication swallow their pride for a moment and give some of it a serious listen.

Right now I've noticed a resurgence of "punk" flavored teen pop — a fact that an aging veteran punk musician friend of mine takes little joy in, much to my surprise. "I have no use for any of this 'kiddie' punk," he told me. "It's too shallow and contrived. I want to listen to music made by people who've actually EXPERIENCED a thing or two in their lives. I want to hear their PAIN." I'm sure that just about every music critic that ever lived would agree with him, but I couldn't disagree more. The LAST thing I want to listen to these days is music born of "pain." That's what indy flicks and "graphic novels" are for!

I also no longer care at all as to how a record is made. After all, a "record" is simply a round piece of plastic that we stick into a machine. Press a button and sound comes out. Whether those "sounds" were credited to Pete Seeger or Milli Vanilli doesn't mean that one is "real" and the other is "fake." It's ALL "fake," in that Pete Seeger is not standing next to you plucking away on his banjo, no matter how much your state-of-the-listening device might suggest otherwise. And conversely: how is any sound NOT "real"? You're hearing SOMETHING, aren't you? Once a sound is committed to record it's all real and/or fake in equal measures, and accepting that fact allows one to appreciate recorded music in a whole new way. •

MY RANDOM TOP-FIVE LIST OF FAVORITE CURRENT TEEN-POP SHLOCKMEISTERS, AND WHY

1 "Absolute" (AKA Watson and Wilson) and/or Stannard and Rowe: The dueling song-writing and production teams that produced the bulk of the Spice Girls' music during their 1996-'98 heyday. Like many of their UK peers, they have club DJ backgrounds, and their list of credits both pre and post-SGs suggest a strong preference for disco and R&B (Matt Rowe in particular has an impressive list of post-SG dance hits to his credit). They all seem to specialize in working with female acts, particularly of the "diva" variety (Kylie Minogue, Tina Turner, etc), which made them particularly well suited for the Spice Girls. (Absolute also co-wrote and produced Geri Halliwell's eccentric — and aptly named — *Schizophonic* CD, of which I am the world's sole defender)

2 Ray "Madman" Hedges: writer/producer of the Irish girl group B*witched (and prior to that worked with the Lynch sisters' older brother Shane's band Boyzone). B*witched's bouncy and joyous first CD is a particularly inspired slice of teen pop, and still holds up extremely well. I have no idea what he's done since then, however — and neither does anyone else, apparently, since a Google word search had only lead me to a record producers' industry site asking for his whereabouts! Madman Hedges Phone Home!

3 "Epicentre," AKA Fredrik Thomander and Anders Wikstrom. The latter was a long-time guitarist for the Swedish hairband "Treat." They wrote and/or produced much of the best material on the Swede teen pop act The A-Teens shockingly wonderful second CD, *Teen Spirit* (see other sidebars). It's hard for me to single out a favorite Swedish pop hack since there's so many of them — ie: Grizzly /Tysper; Anders Bagge (what a weird name!); as well as the legendary Cherion studios, founded by the late DenniZ PoP, and the long-time home of Max Marin and his many collaborators — but if I had to pick just one team it would be these guys, just for their astounding LMNT tune "Juliet" alone.

4 Brian Kierulf and **Josh Schwartz**, AKA "KNS Productions." Still in their early 20s, these two Jersey kids got their start assisting Busta Rhymes in his NYC studio before selling their own demos to the O-Town run Zomba/Jive music empire. They specialize in shamelessly tacky hip-hop tunes for the likes of Radio Disney staple Aaron Carter (though they also display some range, such as with Bitney's Motown-inspired holiday tune "My Only Wish"). I for one think they're hilarious, and their ear for a hook is uncanny. The new Lieber and Stoller!

5 Tsunku — The New Esquivel! This maniacal workaholic is responsible for nearly ALL of the songs recorded by his Japanese all-girl teen music franchise "Morning Musume" and their countless side projects (all of which falls under the umbrella name of "Hello! Project") His music is markedly different from that of his Western counterparts in that the arrangements are much faster and busier and NOISIER. For example, he'll completely change the backing track on the second verse of one song from your basic bass, drums and synthesizer to, say, just a harpsichord and a zither before bursting into a cacophonous jazz/rock fusion instrumental break, all for no apparent reason (other than sheer self indulgence, perhaps?). As a result, his is NOT "background music," in that unless you give it your undivided attention you're sure to wind up with a splitting headache.

Tsunku is also the most deranged Svengali ever. For example, I read that at one live event he introduced his latest side project, "Country Musume," as an act he had recently "discovered" on the "mean streets of New York City" — this in spite of the fact that two of the three members were current and plainly recognizable members of Morning Musume (whose line-up constantly fluctuates between five to as many as thirteen members), while the lone American in the group hailed from Hawaii. What a bald-faced liar! But the audience ate it up anyway, being the obedient little Japanese schoolchildren that they are…

Tsunku also recently put out a solo CD in which he and his bandmates painstakingly re-created a bunch of old Beatles songs, using the same exact studio, equipment and instruments the Fab Four used. What a bunch of Rock Nerds! Yet Tsunku's ability to mimic Lennon in particular makes some of these recordings almost indistinguishable from the originals, even though he doesn't speak English and had to memorize the lyrics phonetically. The only giveaway is that he still occasionally mixed up his L's and R's: "Awr my Ruvin'…"

A Small Sampling of My Fave CDs

The downside to pop record collecting is that the bulk of most LPs (or full-length CDs) usually consist of one, two or three good cuts (i.e.: "The Hits"), while the rest of it is generic, interchangeable filler. This is true now more than ever, where it almost sounds like the last seven or so songs on a Christina Aguilera CD are the SAME seven songs that wrap up a Mandy Moore CD, etc. But every now and then you get the unexpected surprise of putting on a CD and being entertained by it all — or at least MOST — the way through, and the list below features a few that are at the very least worth buying used off of Amazon.

(BTW: I limited the list below to "manufactured" assembly-line pop music — you know, the "evil," shallow, meaningless corporate crap — as opposed to anything made by relatively independent artists of legal age with at least half a brain between their ears. Not that I don't like some of that stuff as well, but SOMEONE'S gotta champion the retarded stuff, and if not me then who?)

A-Teens

Teen Spirit

(Stockholm Records, 2001)

The A-Teens started out as four Swedish Fame School students who were handpicked to re-record and perform updated versions of old Abba songs to foist upon a new generation of teenyboppers. The end result (which can be heard on their first CD, 1999's *Abba Generation*) was a huge international success — and deservedly so, since many of their Abba covers are much better than the original versions (in my opinion anyway, though I was never a huge Abba fan to begin with) They're great to watch, too, with cute, hyper dance routines that seem to combine hip-hop with Nordic folk dancing. The only thing missing are the reindeer! I get really excited whenever I catch them on TV. Call me senile if you will, but they're my favorite current musical act by far.

Their second CD, *Teen Spirit*, on the other hand, has no covers on it. Instead it just features songs written and produced by various teams from Sweden's seemingly bottomless pop music talent pool, and the better songs on here quite honestly make up some of the best music I've ever heard. The first 5 songs in a row are all b'gum masterpieces, creating a standard the rest of the CD can't possibly live up to (though some of that bulk is pretty great as well, especially the closer, "Back For More"). The same names keep popping up in the writer/producer credits as well, particularly Grizzly/Tysper and the Epicentre team (see accompanying interview). This CD reminds me a lot of the Beach Boys' *Sunflower*, in that it has very lush, layered vocal arrangements and crisp, shimmering production values. It's the HAPPIEST music I've ever heard!

The stars were definitely aligned for this CD, and it gets my vote as the BEST single CD of the entire current ('96 – now) B'gum Era. As a result, their latest release, *New Arrival* (2003), was bound to be a disappointment, though it does have a few standout cuts, such as "Perfect Match" (which is NOT featured on the U.S. version, amazingly). They've also gone back to doing covers, which range from excellent (i.e.: an inspired reinvention of Elvis's "Can't Help Falling in Love") to horrendous (i.e. Alice Cooper's "School's Out," featuring Alice himself. Whoever brainstormed THAT team-up should be shot!).

A-Teens

Aaron Carter

Oh, Aaron

(Jive Records, 2001)

On the surface, everything about Aaron Carter is Wrong. His talents are limited, and it's safe to assume that the only reason he's making records is because his older brother is The Backstreet Boys' Nick Carter (and that BOTH of them are "blessed," if that's the right word, by having a notoriously aggressive stage mother). Plus the two words "white" and "rapper" are usually a recipe for awfulness when combined together. And make no mistake: Aaron's a lousy rapper.

Yet, I LOVE his rapping. For one thing, he never pretends to be anything other than whiter than Wonderbread — and unapologetically so, as he squawks with glee about his new dirt bike or Sony Playstation. He is almost deliberately, aggressively "wack" — such as in one hilarious moment on his live Disney special where he attempts to bust some break-dancing moves and completely fails, as he immediately falls to the ground in a spastic heap. Yet rather than try again or cover up his faux pas in some cool way, he just turns to the audience, shrugs embarrassedly and laughs!

As was the case with his brother's band, Carter's career was initially launched in Europe, when he was still a precocious 9-yr-old singing what were basically classic children's songs set to dance beats. His first U.S. release, *Aaron's Party*, featured more of the same, along with some incredibly kitschy-yet-entertaining rap tunes specifically written for him (including the hair-raisingly hokey "How I Beat Shaq" which ought to be the official anthem for high-fivin' white guys everywhere).

Aaron Carter (his third CD overall, but his second stateside) includes only new songs specifically written for him — mostly by Jive/Zomba regulars like Andy Goldmark and my current favorite hacks-geniuses Brian Kierulf and Josh Schwartz, all three of whom collaborated on the (unintentionally?) hilarious rap ballad, "I Would," in which Aaron recites a long list of strained analogies to express how he and his girl belong together ("We're like Babe Ruth and his bat; Tiger Woods and his Nike hat!"), culminating in one that's even too much for Aaron himself, when the line "Be my Baywatch girl, and I'll be your David Hasselhoff" is punctuated by a loud "NAH!"

Aaron Carter

The craziest thing is, "I Would" is a fantastic song. It's got this great, super simple piano riff running throughout, as well as VERY catchy chorus. ALL of Aaron's records have HOOKS GALORE, as anyone who's listened to Radio Disney for more than 30 minutes would be forced to concede. I always catch people singing along to his records who would otherwise "hate" him if they knew who or what it was they were singing along to

My one complaint is that, like his brother Nick, Aaron Carter actually has a very good, nasally "rock" SINGING voice (best evidenced on this CD on the Archies-esque "Baby, It's You"), so I wish they would phase out this whole "rapper" thing — I wish the WHOLE WORLD would phase out this whole "rapper thing" at this point — and just let the kid sing rock songs from now on. Just a thought!

B*witched

*B*witched*

(Epic/Sony, 1998)

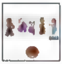
Ireland's "answer to the Spice Girls," B*witched (the asterisk is the result of a lawsuit filed by another band with the same name), featured four perky, young fame

B*witched

schoolers, and were built around the Lynch twins, Edele and Keavy, with the former doing all the lead singing. Being Irish was basically their entire shtick (in spite of the fact that one of them was Greek), with both their music and dance routines having a heaping helping of Gaelic flavor added to their groovy dance beats.

B*witched went the way of so many other pop acts: a good first CD with lots of buzz and seemingly unlimited potential followed by a disappointing follow up (usually due to a deliberate attempt to sound more "mature" in an attempt to lengthen their careers, while unwittingly shortening it), and then… nothing. Whatever happened to B*witched? Even the keepers of their own website don't know or care, since it hasn't been updated in 2 years. Their indifference almost seems cruel!

This first CD of theirs holds up real well, though. "Rollercoaster," "Rev It Up," "C'est La Vie" — great songs all — and the rest of it is at least listenable. It's extremely lively and bouncy, and lead singer Edele has a unique and endearing singing voice. They also were great performers. What can I say? I'm a sucker for this kind of crap.



Spice Girls

SpiceWorld

(Virgin, 1997)

The train wreck that was the Spice Girls after Geri's departure (and which continues with their respective solo "careers") often causes me to wonder if they were ever really any good in the first place: was I just blinded by Ginger's tits and Baby's ass? Am I still susceptible to the mechanizations of Madison Avenue, who somehow temporarily convinced me that this shit was shinola?

But when I listen to this CD I get sucked in all over again, for reasons that are hard to put my finger on. It just sounds and feels like the accumulation of something; of this whole persona and worldview that they created. It IS a "Spice World" that you hear on this CD! A casual listen doesn't quite get that point across, though. You have to listen to it intently, for those who are so inclined. It also isn't that far removed from the tacky awfulness of their solo work, since even at their best the SG's are incredibly loud and vain and tacky. They have no "class" at all, and they all have overbearing "diva" type personalities, yet it was the combination and CELEBRATION of all of the above that made them work as a group. It also was a delicate balancing act, since as soon as one piece of the puzzle was removed the entire thing fell apart like a house of cards.

That being said, this CD is a mind-bogglingly insane, inspired masterpiece. It's also incredibly well produced. I DESPERATELY want to interview the writer/producers, since there's a bazillion things I'd love to ask them about this record, only their management, Native 19 (owned and run by Simon Fuller), won't let me near them. "Company policy." Fuckers.

DOWNLOADABLES!

And now, for you kidz who are way beyond that old record BUYING jazz, here's a list of songs that I deem worthy of downloading. With a few exceptions, I leaned more towards tunes that have a more rockin' (rather than an R&B, reggae or disco) beat to 'em. They also are all fairly recent releases, to keep me from prattling on forever.

Disco Hippie

by **Play**

A bit of B-52s-inspired lunacy by an otherwise "soulful" sounding Swedish all-girl singing group.

Juliet

by **LMNT**

Another atypical rock song by a more R&B-leaning boy band. This song has been in heavy rotation on Radio Disney for about 2 years now.

All Around the World

by **Cooler Kids**

A boy DJ "sampler" with a girl singer. You will wind up playing this song a million times in a row, after which you will never want to hear it again for as long as you live.

Life Is a Party

by **Aaron Carter**

From the "Rugrats In Paris" soundtrack.

Jesse Hold On

by **B*witched**

The lone standout on their 2nd CD.

Everybody Wants Ya

by **S Club 7**

Absolute at their Absolutiest.

Another Dumb Blonde

by **Hoku**

Don Ho's daughter. Another No-Talent Bottle Blonde with a Famous Dad is more like it. And what's wrong with that?

Hoku

Promises and *Round Round*

by **Sugababes**

3 mean-looking girls from the UK. Big in Europe; nobodies in the US. They have a very distinct sweet-yet-raspy vocal sound.

Happy Summer Wedding

by **Morning Musume**

Utter madness from the Japanese Spice Girls. There's nothing the least bit romantic or wedding-like about this song, either. It should have been called "Food Fight at the Drunken Baboon's Birthday Party"!

Morning Musume

Malchik Gay

by **T.A.T.U.**

More foreign madness, this time by that faux-lesbian Russian twosome that has taken all the world by storm except for the U.S. (the sight of two teenaged girls kissing makes us throw up, apparently). This one is their most Slavic sounding number!

Love So Pure and *True Asia*

by **Puffy**

A 2-girl Jap group with a very British Invasion sound to their music. Here in the States they're marketed as "PuffyAmiYumi" to avoid the wrath of Puff Daddy's lawyers, even though he doesn't even go by the name "Puffy" anymore. What an asshole!

My Myself and I

by **JIVE Jones**

A really dumb song by some spiky haired Lenny Kravitz sound-and-look-alike. He also co-wrote Mandy Moore's "Candy," another good dumb song.

JIVE Jones

That's What Girls Do

by **No Secrets**

A 5 girl group from Lou Pearlman's Jive/Zomba slave plantation. ONE of these girls has a very strong, distinctive singing voice that rides high on top of all of their harmonies, giving them a very full, lush sound. I don't know which girl it is, though.

Lucky and *Stronger*

by **Britney Spears**

Max Martin's greatest achievements, from Britney's otherwise lame 2nd CD. The first is a McCartney-esque cautionary tale — did Spears realize this song was all about HER? — complete with hammy speaking parts by Max himself. The latter took a while to grow on me, though now it leaves me dumb-founded whenever I play it. It's a mind-blowing explosion of diva defiance! •

INTERVIEW WITH A HACK GENIUS:

My chat with Fredrik Thomander of Epicentre Productions

(This emailed correspondence took place on August 19th, 2002. Fredrik wrote to me from his home in Stockholm, Sweden)

HATE ANNUAL: *How did the two of you make the leap (however gradual) from being in Metal bands to writing and producing teen pop? Was it strictly based on economics, or did your changing aesthetic tastes have anything to do with it?*

FREDRICK THOMANDER: Anders (Wikstrom) and I did a tour together and we found we had similar tastes in melodies and songwriting. That was 4-5 years ago, when pop music was almost all about old covers. It seemed like there was a real need for new pop songs. So we started writing songs without the distortion pedal on, so to speak. Our songs always had a lot of melodies, so the leap from hard rock to pop wasn't that big… We never had any teen pop plans, but one of the first songs we wrote together was recorded by Nsync for their "No Strings Attached" album, and that kind of jumpstarted the whole thing.

HA: *Heavy Metal is just another form of pop, yet most Metal fans would claim that the type of pop you make now is the polar opposite of Metal. How would you respond to this seeming contradiction?*

FT: We've never been true "metal freaks." We both listen to a lot of different music, and always have. I guess most pop writers from Sweden have a similar background. Max Martin, Rami and Andreas Carlsson have all done their share of falsetto screams and headbanging. I guess it was a good school for practicing patience and precision. Which is also needed in pop production.

HA: *Did you start writing demos for others before the recent teen pop phenomenon, or in response to it?*

FT: Pop has always been quite big in Europe. But it blew up in the US at the same time we started to shop our first demos.

HA: *Do you have much control over what happens to your songs once you've sold it to an act, like, say, the A-Teens?*

FT: We own the rights to the song, but the A-Teens' record company owns the recording. Still, if they want to use it, in for instance a commercial, they have to check with us.

HA: *For example, "Sugar Rush" wound up being produced by the Tremelo team (who did a great job with it, in my opinion), while your other compositions were produced by yourselves. Was this okay with you?*

FT: Oh yeah, the Tremolo guys are great. They've produced a few other songs we've written for some other artists. We don't have time to produce all the songs we write.

It takes so much time, and sometimes it's great when someone else finds a twist in the production. Then again, we've had other cases when we've been really disappointed and then we wish we'd done it ourselves…

Fredrik Thomander (l), with writing partner Anders Wikstrom.

Europe has another vibe. More melody, less lyric driven. Also more uptempo in general. Some songs we've had success with over here would probably never make the jump to the US…

HA: *Do these records' executive producers (usually the acts' own management) have total say over the final outcome of the songs' sound, to the point that you sometimes barely recognize the final outcome? And if so, does this ever bother or upset the two of you?*

FT: If they like the song and want us to produce it, that means they probably liked the demo. Then we discuss what should be fixed and worked on. They do have the final opinion in that they're the check-payers, so to say. But usually it's a productive discussion between all of us.

HA: *Are there any recordings you've done as a team that you're particularly proud of? Or particularly unhappy with?*

FT: …Hard question… We always find things that we could have done better afterwards.

But we did like "Juliet" (by LMNT) a lot. The ones we're really unhappy with never leaves our garbage bin…

HA: *Similarly, are there any acts or singers that you particularly enjoy working with?*

FT: We're now working with and Australian artist called Vanessa Amorosi. She's a great singer, and the songs we're doing with her feel very strong.

HA: *Do you get very different reactions to your songs in different markets? In other words, have you noticed any songs doing well in Europe that have gotten no response in America and vice versa?*

FT: Europe has another vibe. More melody, less lyric driven. Also more uptempo in general. Some songs we've had success with over here would probably never make the jump to the US and vice versa.

HA: *Do you sense the pop market making any stylistic shift right now? And are you hoping it shifts in any particular direction?*

FT: It's changing for sure. I think we'll see more bands playing their own instruments. People have always loved great songs. It's just the format that changes. Like we changed our format 4 years ago…

HA: *Speaking of bands that (allegedly) play their own instruments. I wanted to ask you about the American band you worked with called "Natural," who're managed by Lou Pearlman. I heard some of their songs months ago while on an overseas airline flight and liked them a lot, but their CD is still unavailable in the US! Do you have any idea why?*

FT: They're big in Germany and some other countries over here… So I guess they're doing the same rut as Nsync did (i.e.: market them in Europe first, and then — MAYBE — push them back here in the States).

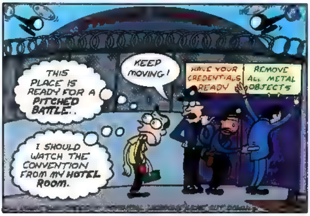
HA: *Thank you so much! I Really appreciate it.*

FT: I hope this will be OK! I can make you a CD with some the stuff you haven't heard yet if you want. And it would be great to get a copy of this article!

HA: *Deal!* •

"Just think!" I thought to myself, "I get to cover the 2000 Democratic Convention for Suck.com!" Yeah, me and about 50 million other journalists, but it still felt like a big deal to me at the time. Plus there was a lot of buzz over the possibility of protesters getting out of hand like they did in Seattle during the WTO meetings. We're talking RIOTS, folks! BIG ones!!! Who'd want to miss out on that action? (From a nice, safe distance, that is)

There was a noticeably increased police presence throughout the city of Los Angeles, but in downtown LA the coppers were everywhere — LEGIONS of them: motorcycle brigades, SWAT teams, helicopters, mounted police, etc.... The obvious intention was to discourage and suppress any possibility of another WTO debacle, so that even a loud fart might attract a swarm of heavily armed and helmeted riot police in your general direction. And there sure wasn't much jaywalking going on that week!



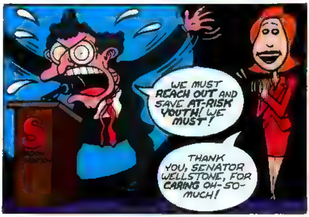
The omnipresence of law-enforcement was simultaneously harrowing AND reassuring — reassuring for someone like me at least, being a middle-aged white guy in a suit and tie who had no real desire to get stuck in the middle of some protest that's suddenly gone out of control. However, anyone whose fashion sensibility leans more towards sandals, backpacks and dreadlocks would have been well advised to stay far away from Downtown LA that week — unless you enjoy being RELENTLESSLY HARASSED by someone in a uniform, that is. Still, there were plenty of folks whose attire screamed "I'm a Protester!" in downtown LA as well that weekend. As a result it took quite an effort to avoid getting stuck in the middle of this endless cat and mouse game going on between the cops and the scraggly dressed martyrs for who-knows-what-cause who were constantly testing and taunting them.

Starting one day before the DNC was Ariana Huffington's "Shadow Convention" — an alternative convention held "in the shadows" of both the GOP convention in Philly and the DNC, in which the certain key issues (most notably the disastrous "War on Drugs," as well as that tiresome old subject of "Campaign Finance Reform") are addressed in a noisier, more direct manner by various experts on the subject, as well as a number of frustrated politicians. Also on the bill were several comedic commentators (Bill Maher, Harry Shearer, Al Franken, etc.), to both liven things up and generate more media interest in this funky "rebel" con.

This is the same Ms. Huffington whose then-closeted gay husband ran a losing 30 million dollar senate campaign in California a few years back, and who has since reinvented herself as a left-wing populist (though she still looks and talks just like Ivana Trump). She served as a fairly amusing MC for this event, and any injection of humor was much appreciated, since most of the guest speakers came off like insufferable, self-righteous preachers!

One of the more personable speakers, Senator Russ Feingold (D-WI), was at least honest enough to admit that "soft money" isn't

merely bribery but also a form of EXTORTION on the part of his fellow lawmakers, most of whom were busy shaking down LA's entertainment industry while he spoke. Feingold also was willing to state the inevitable conclusion of all this "campaign finance" talk by proposing that EVERY candidate running for congress should have his entire campaign paid for by tax dollars. That sounds like completely unworkable insanity to me, yet the rest of the crowd LOVED that proposal. Free Money gets a big hand every time!



Since I was a member of the "Lesser Media," the Democratic Party rather undemocratically made me re-register for my press credentials EVERY DAY at a hotel that was a good twenty minute hike from the Convention Center itself — during one of the worst heat waves in LA's history! You can kiss MY vote goodbye, you stupid Dems! Compounding this indignity was their Byzantine system of color-coded passes, which signified how much of the convention center you had access to. Needless to say, my lime-green pass didn't allow for too much freedom of movement, though I was at least a step above the social ladder to the people with purple passes (i.e.: the "untouchables") weren't allowed even to ENTER the Staples Center! All they could do was stand outside the exits with forlorn looks on their faces. Poor Purple People!

Meanwhile, the oppressive heat was even more effective than the oppressive police presence in putting the kibosh on any rowdiness that any riot-inclined protesters may have indulged in (during the daytime, anyway). The few actual protest types I saw looked too beat even to carry their signs, let alone get a rally going for a Free Tibet — though I'm surprised the Environmentalists didn't take advantage of the weather to illustrate their case against GLOBAL WARMING.

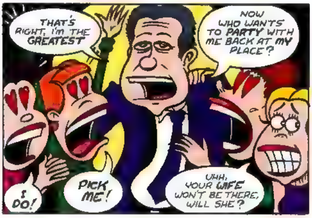
Headlining the first day of the DNC were President Bill Clinton and his wife, the New York State senate candidate Hillary Clinton. Leading up to the convention all the pundits were talking endlessly about the Clintons "stealing the show" from the Dem's Presidential nominee Al Gore — a well-founded fear, but so what? After eight years in the White House shouldn't they be allowed to get up there and strut their stuff for an hour or so? Besides, this "show" needed some stealing, since every speaker leading up to the Clintons was an insufferable BORE.

After a big build-up by a gaggle of cheer-leading female Democratic senators, Hillary came out to a thunderous welcome. Democratic delegates tend to be more left-leaning than the average party member (just as your average GOP delegate leans more to the right), and this was made obvious by the half hearted applause any mention that Hillary — or anyone else — made to our booming economy received, as opposed to the squeals of approval at the mention of any new or expanded federal government program. "Boo" to MAKING money; "HOORAY" for spending it — that's these delegates' mindset in a nutshell.

Hillary also got a lot of support from the crowd when she praised both Tipper "NPRC" Gore AND Vice Presidential candidate Joe "Video Games Cause Cancer" Leiberman for their past and present censorship campaigns, which made me wonder: what, exactly, does it mean to be a "liberal" these days? These staunch defenders of the status quo aren't liberals — they're CONTROL FREAKS!

After a 20 minute infomercial of his "greatest hits" — followed by an entrance that would embarrass even the biggest hambone WWF wrestler — President Bill Clinton gave a corker of a speech to the adoring throng. Clinton looked and acted just like a rooster taking credit for making the sun come up as he praised himself not just for the robust economy but for every single good thing that's happened to every American for the past 8 years, mixed in which some pretty amusing pot shots at those squaresville Republicans. Did you know we were in a deep, dark depression back in '92? Neither did I, but Bill claims to have single-handedly saved us from that as well. Wotta Prez!

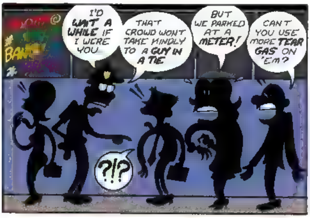
It's pretty hard not to be charmed by Clinton's cocksure attitude, though. He's another Dean Martin: reeking of the "stuff" that every guy in the room wishes he was made of, while getting even the most rabid feminists to line up defending him against every rape allegation (while vilifying dorks like Bob Packwood and Clarence Thomas over their own failed come-ons). Meanwhile, literally ALL the women around me, from ages 17 to 70, were staring at President with their eyeballs bulging out of their heads, UTTERLY HYPNOTIZED by his presence. There wasn't a dry seat in the house, folks!



These women all adore both Bill AND Hillary, even though the Clintons have the most famously dysfunctional marriage in human history. Am I missing something here? You bet I am!

At the same exact time the President was wowing the faithful, the first (and as it turns out, the biggest) riot was taking place right outside the Staples Center. Apparently some idiot okayed everyone's favorite corporate anti-corporate rock band, Rage Against The Machine, to give a free concert in the designated "protest area" right outside the arena. They might as well have dialed up Riots-To-Go. I mean, what were they THINKING?!?

By the time everyone else started exiting the Convention Hall the police had already come down on the rioters like a ton of bricks, which brought out a mixture of guilt AND relief from the evening gown-wearing delegates (many of whom are former protesters themselves), who obviously were all thinking: "This is an outrageous abuse of the protesters' civil rights — yet Thank God I can now walk safely back to my hotel!" Meanwhile, we conventioneers had to wait a good half hour before the cops let us out of this chain-linked PEN they constructed for our safety. All of a sudden my formerly trusty suit and tie had become a LIABILITY.



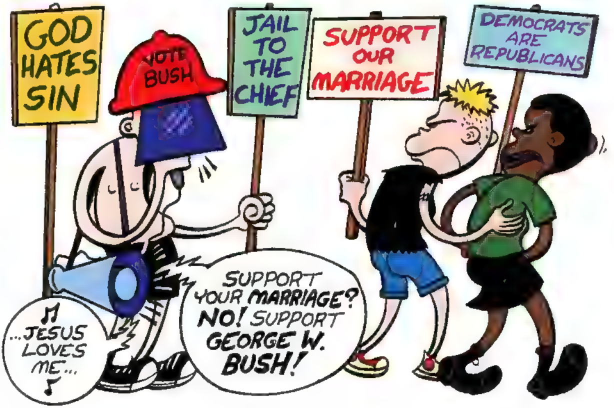
There were still a few straggling protesters milling about (and I'm using the term "protesters" VERY loosely, since what had just occurred was little more than yer typical rock 'n' roll riot — along with some pepper spray and rubber bullets to give everyone present a lifetime's worth of bragging rights), and us old folks had to walk a mini-gauntlet through them, as they shouted some politically flavored epithets in our direction. After one or two blocks of this nonsense the coast was suddenly, amazingly clear. Apparently the cops were off corralling the majority of hell-raisers in some other direction. Whew!

Once I got to the parking garage, I saw some poor guy herding his frazzled womenfolk into a rented limo. Once they were all safely tucked inside I made some joke like "That wasn't so bad, now was it?" He laughed a bit TOO hard, relieved at not having to wash tear gas out of his mother-in-law's eyes.

After being convinced by my fellow reporters that the 'real" story was happening OUTSIDE the Staples Center (and not wanting to endure another day of the stupefying, sanctimonious speeches that were sure to be going on inside it), I decided to spend the second day of the Convention in the great outdoors, amongst the "people" yearning to have their messages heard by the powers that be. BIG MISTAKE! For the most part all I saw were small groups of CRACKPOTS (many of them of the right-wing Christian you're-all-going-to-hell-for-supporting-abortion variety) yelling and hollering in all directions, while the various left-wing crackpots shouted equally inane nonsense back at them. These are the folks who make the First Amendment seem like a REALLY BAD IDEA.

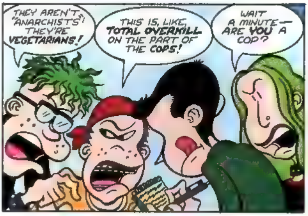
Then there were groups of colored t-shirt-coordinated "legitimate" protesters: striking laborers and the like, totally exhausted after a day of parading under the boiling hot sun, while wondering if a dollar-per-hour raise is really worth getting a heat stroke over. But the most insane looking people of all were the black clad, helmeted, armed-to-the teeth riot police who would form a tense circle around any group that started to chant — JUST IN CASE. Who's gonna get out of hand in this heat?!?

Things got SO boring that at one point I was sorely tempted to hurl a rock in the cops' direction while standing behind a group of



weird looking kids holding "Vote for Bob Dobbs" picket signs, figuring they'd be sure to take the blame for it while I'd have my front row seat to a red-hot "exclusive." I didn't, of course, though if I did I'm sure I wouldn't have been the only journalist there to attempt such a stunt. A scoop's a scoop, after all!

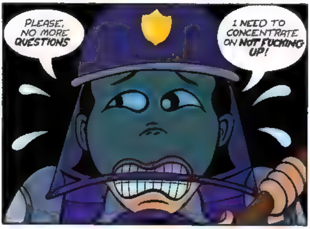
Speaking of scoops, I did stumble across what at first looked like the beginning of World War Three when a bazillion cops suddenly swarmed like locusts, blocking off an entire city block in the blink of an eye. And I mean they CHOKED it off, cramming the entire block with as many police vehicles as was physically possible while not allowing even office workers to return from their afternoon coffee breaks.



"What's going on?" was on everyone's lips, since as far as anyone could tell NOTHING was going on, when suddenly an eager young reporter standing next to me is phoning in the hot poop that he just gleaned from the sergeant-at-arms at the head of blockade. "Anarchists!" he frantically whispered into his cell phone while trying to keep my prying, too-lazy-to-get-my-own-scoop ears at bay. "DOZENS of them! The cops just thwarted a full-scale terrorist attack! We're witnessing a MASS ARREST!" We ARE? Where? WHAT "terrorists"?

Not wanting to annoy the fierce-looking Sergeant-at-Arms with the same old questions, I turned to a handful of green-haired teens who were present, wondering if maybe it was their FRIENDS who were getting arrested. According to them it was just a handful of animal rights activists who got busted after knocking over a display in a furrier store. There's your "terrorist attack," folks!

Later that night while watching the news I discovered that the truth was somewhere in between: No, they weren't "anarchists," but there was more than a handful of them (30 to 45, the figure kept changing), and No, they weren't "terrorists," but they did have backpacks full of lighter fluid and paint balls, which the police referred to "incendiary devices" (flaming paint balls?). Did the cops overreact? In retrospect, yes; but when 45 chanting hippies storm into some stuffy furrier's store right in the middle of the trip-wire atmosphere of the Democratic Convention, isn't an "overreaction" to be expected? Isn't that, in fact, the DESIRED EFFECT?



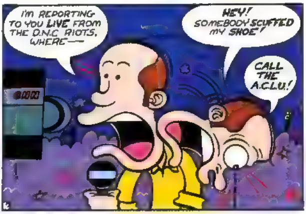
Unfortunately, with their backs up against the wall already due to an endless series of scandals, the LAPD felt compelled to blow this supposed terrorist threat all out of proportion. These coppers are walking on eggshells, figuring (correctly) that every single move they make will be criticized by both the protesters AND the press. A siege mentality is in full effect. EVERYONE is a nemesis in this scripted little psycho-drama, with each group playing their stereotypical part to the hilt.

Realizing this, I decided not to waste my time asking anyone's opinion about anything for the remainder of the convention, since I know EXACTLY what they're gonna say before they even say it. From now on all I'm gonna do is WATCH and read the box scores. Go, Mariners!

This assignment also made me lose a lot of respect for my fellow journalists. Don't let 'em kid ya, folks — they're here to see a FIGHT! That's why we were sent here: to sniff out BLOOD, as we go running willy-nilly from one sign of trouble to the next like a bunch of jackals With tens of thousands of reporters milling about in the streets there'd BETTER be a fucking riot. Our bosses want their money's worth!

And when we don't see any trouble we CAUSE it by asking obnoxious questions and sticking cameras and microphones in people's faces; we're constantly blurring the "battle lines" between the cops and the protesters, knowingly agitating an already volatile situation by GETTING IN THE GODDAMNED WAY.

That's why I want to vomit when I read about some boss from CNN demanding an apology from the LAPD due to some tech getting kicked in the stomach in the middle of a melee; or when one of these Martyrs-for-the-Cause-of-Truth goes on TV showing off their rubber bullet wounds, claiming the cops were DELIBERATELY shooting at the press. Golly! What do you suppose would make them DO such a thing? Wait — weren't you the one who was standing in the middle of a bunch of assholes who were giving the cops the finger and throwing bottles at them? And what did you THINK would happen once all hell broke lose? A pillow fight? Did you expect the rubber bullets to somehow magically shoot AROUND you once the cops opened fire, thanks to your Invisible Protective Journo-Shield ™? Maybe, just maybe, you DESERVED to be shot by a rubber bullet for being such a fucking MORON!



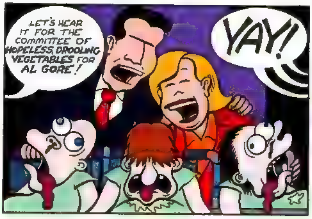
I must confess that I also was manhandled by those mean ol' policemens myself once — after willfully defying them, not surprisingly. An impromptu parade had started just as I was heading for home on the last day — protesting police brutality, ironically — and the police where doing their usual swarm-and-block routine along the parade's route as a form of crowd control. A bicycle cop instructed me to take the long way around to get to get to my car, but being both curious AND impatient I walked headlong into the parade's direction and suddenly saw that I had no place to go, since the parade was a rather large and boisterous one, and the police who were following it on either side wouldn't let anyone stand on the other side of route. While vainly trying to press myself up against a wall, a cop grabbed me as he passed by and THREW me into the parade with the cop-hating protesters!

In retrospect I still can't decide if I should be pissed about this, or if I was asking for it.

One thing that truly DID piss me off, however, is that when I got to my car I found a $40 dollar parking ticket on it — and I was parked LEGALLY, too! MAN, did that frost me. SMASH THE STATE!

Meanwhile, the convention itself went on with business as usual: swinging Hollywood parties thrown on behalf of wealthy donors at night ("I met Brad Pitt! We're BUDS now!" exclaimed some big-spending dot com doofus from Omaha after one of these shindigs); while the relentlessly maudlin sob-sister bleatings over "working families" and "The Children" continued unabated during the day.

The final straw for me was when they announced an upcoming "Tribute to Caregivers," which I imagined being a bunch of beaming politicians sharing center stage with a handful of multi-ethnic bedpan changers. That was my cue to escape permanently to the "Media Suite" with its free food and beer (thanks, BellSouth!), though I still had to sit under a display of coerced "children's art" — i.e.: uninspired scribbles proclaiming "Pleez dont HIT peepl," and "dont litr the owshin" — while I gnawed on my hot dog. There was no escape!



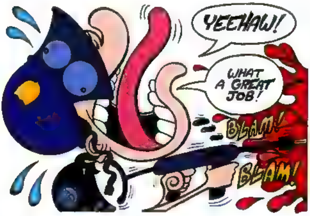
Finally, Gore (who, word on the street has it, is a "whore") made his acceptance speech. He recited a huge laundry list of "programs" that he vowed to spend ever more money on, and his approval rating skyrocketed the next day. YES to Free Money, was the American Public's response! High Fives All Around! WHOO HOO! He also promised more "tax breaks" for "working families." What the hell is a "Working Family," anyway? And more to the point: who or what ISN'T in one? What do you call those, "Goof-off Families"? Is that who the Republicans represent? Let-George-Do-It Families? Families that Hit Peepl and Litr the Owshin?

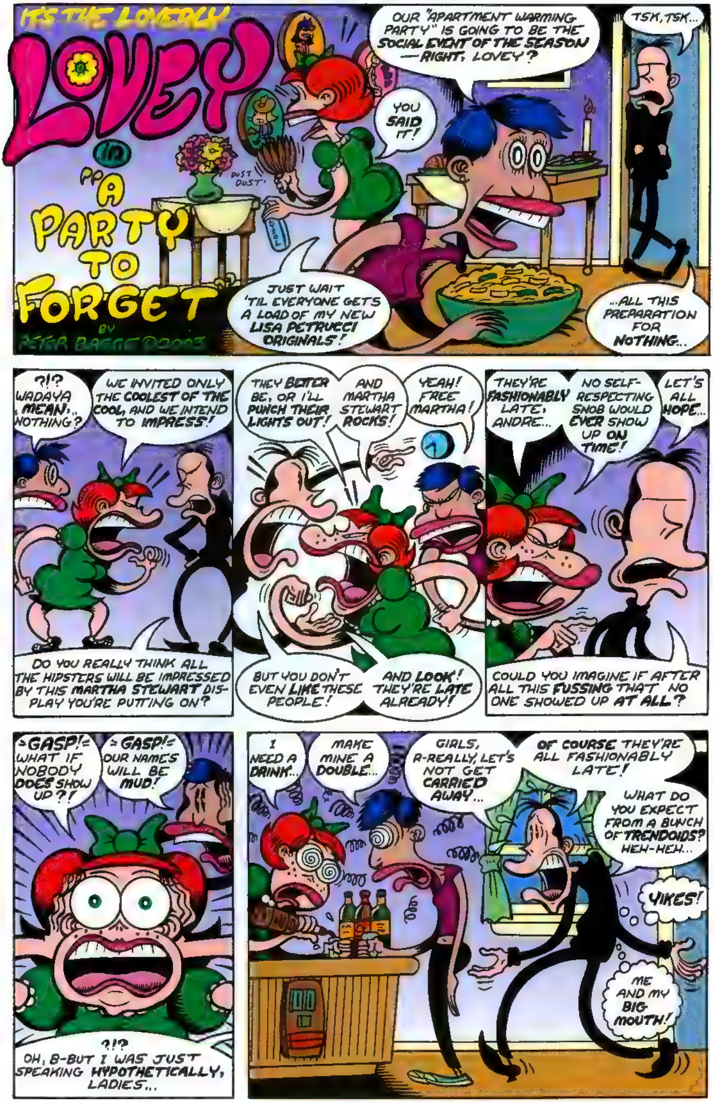
Of course, Bush is for "Working Families" too. And "The Children." AND "Family Values" (?!?). So is Buchanan. So is Nader! They're ALL for The Children and Working Families and Family Values! You can't go wrong with ANY of these candidates, folks! I say let's vote for ALL of them! They can SHARE the White House! They can share it with THE HOMELESS, seeing how they all CARE so goddamned much. And how about some more public funding for even MORE coerced "children's art" exhibits while were at it! I sure care about bad Children's Art. DON'T YOU?

Do I sound a tad cynical right about now? If so, I defy anyone to sit through one of these political conventions and not wind up feeling the same way. The only people I came away feeling the slightest bit of admiration for were the cops for not blowing away EVERYBODY when they had the chance. Such restraint! I know I would've wound up blasting everybody's brains out if I was as heavily armed as they were: the protesters, the delegates, the politicians, the press — EVERYBODY. BLAM ! BLAM! BLAM! YEEEE-HAH!!!

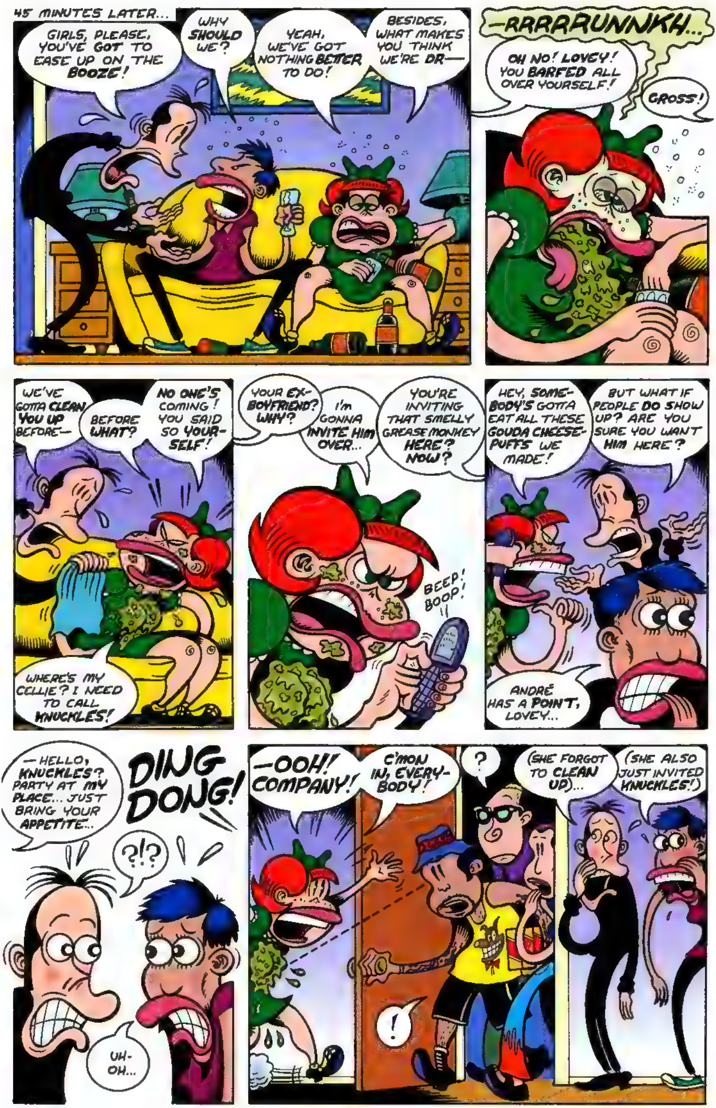
Just kidding. Hey, I'm a big fat democracy lover — unlike many of the noisier participants I witnessed at these conventions, some of whom seem like they would LOVE to be totalitarian dictators (both Pat Buchanan and Hillary Clinton come to mind, as well as the more violent "protesters") if only this stupid document called the Constitution wasn't standing in their way. They all seem so… FRUSTRATED over the fact that EVERYTHING isn't done EXACTLY the way they want things to be done. Poor Babies!

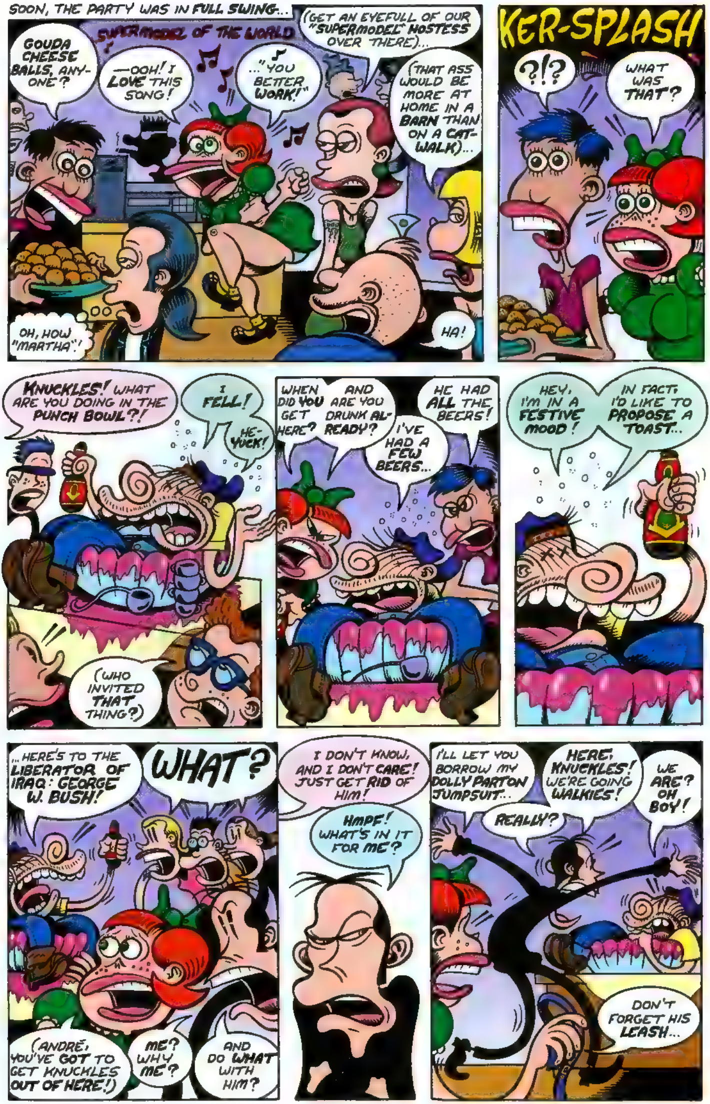
Otto Von Bismarck once said that watching laws being passed is much like watching sausages being made, and I would throw political conventions in this category as well. Thanks to the DNC I'll never be able to eat another sausage again! •



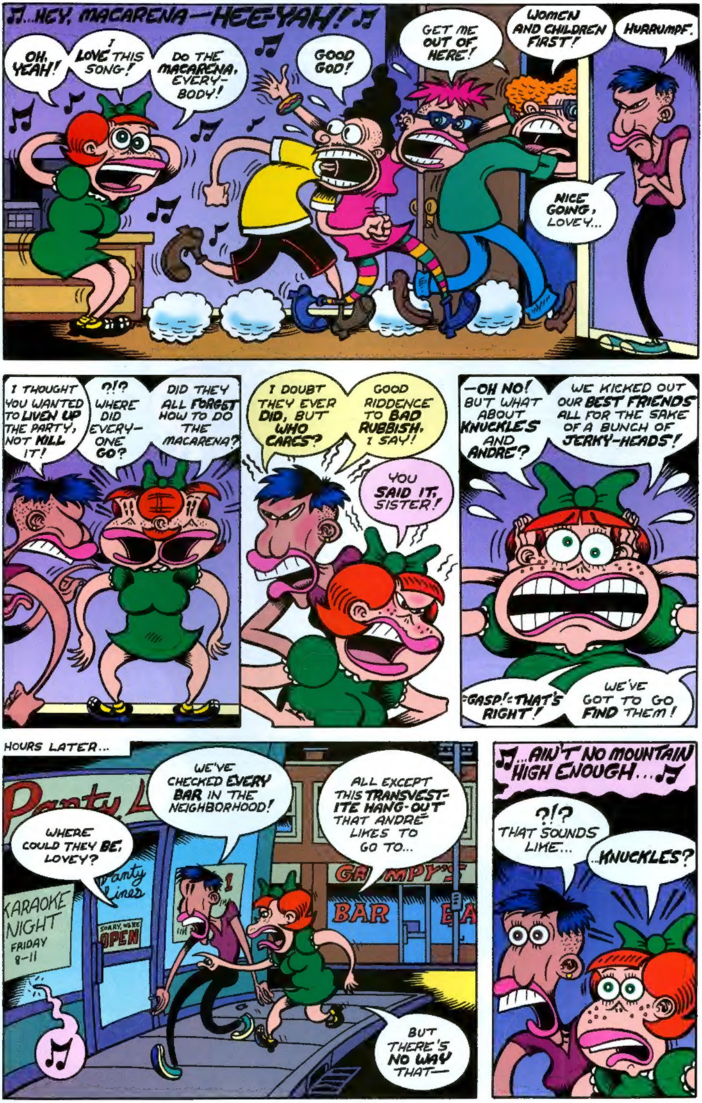


IT'S THE LOVERLY
LOVEY
IN
"A PARTY TO FORGET"
BY PETER BAGGE ©2003
DUST DUST
OUR "APARTMENT WARMING PARTY" IS GOING TO BE THE SOCIAL EVENT OF THE SEASON — RIGHT, LOVEY?
YOU SAID IT!
TSK, TSK...
JUST WAIT 'TIL EVERYONE GETS A LOAD OF MY NEW LISA PETRUCCI ORIGINALS!
...ALL THIS PREPARATION FOR NOTHING...
?!? WADAYA MEAN, "NOTHING"?
WE INVITED ONLY THE COOLEST OF THE COOL, AND WE INTEND TO IMPRESS!
DO YOU REALLY THINK ALL THE HIPSTERS WILL BE IMPRESSED BY THIS MARTHA STEWART DISPLAY YOU'RE PUTTING ON?
THEY BETTER BE, OR I'LL PUNCH THEIR LIGHTS OUT!
AND MARTHA STEWART ROCKS!
YEAH! FREE MARTHA!
BUT YOU DON'T EVEN LIKE THESE PEOPLE!
AND LOOK! THEY'RE LATE ALREADY!
THEY'RE FASHIONABLY LATE, ANDRE...
NO SELF-RESPECTING SNOB WOULD EVER SHOW UP ON TIME!
LET'S ALL HOPE...
COULD YOU IMAGINE IF AFTER ALL THIS FUSSING THAT NO ONE SHOWED UP AT ALL?
=GASP!= WHAT IF NOBODY DOES SHOW UP?!
=GASP!= OUR NAMES WILL BE MUD!
?!? OH, B-BUT I WAS JUST SPEAKING HYPOTHETICALLY, LADIES...
I NEED A DRINK...
MAKE MINE A DOUBLE...
GIRLS, R-REALLY, LET'S NOT GET CARRIED AWAY...
OF COURSE THEY'RE ALL FASHIONABLY LATE!
WHAT DO YOU EXPECT FROM A BUNCH OF TRENDOIDS? HEH-HEH...
YIKES!
ME AND MY BIG MOUTH!


45 MINUTES LATER...
GIRLS, PLEASE, YOU'VE GOT TO EASE UP ON THE BOOZE!
WHY SHOULD WE?
YEAH, WE'VE GOT NOTHING BETTER TO DO!
BESIDES, WHAT MAKES YOU THINK WE'RE DR—
—RRRRRUNNKH...
OH NO! LOVEY! YOU BARFED ALL OVER YOURSELF!
GROSS!
WE'VE GOTTA CLEAN YOU UP BEFORE—
BEFORE WHAT?
NO ONE'S COMING! YOU SAID SO YOURSELF!
WHERE'S MY CELLIE? I NEED TO CALL KNUCKLES!
YOUR EX-BOYFRIEND? WHY?
I'M GONNA INVITE HIM OVER...
YOU'RE INVITING THAT SMELLY GREASE MONKEY HERE? NOW?
BEEP! BOOP!
HEY, SOMEBODY'S GOTTA EAT ALL THESE GOUDA CHEESE-PUFFS WE MADE!
BUT WHAT IF PEOPLE DO SHOW UP? ARE YOU SURE YOU WANT HIM HERE?
ANDRÉ HAS A POINT, LOVEY...
—HELLO, KNUCKLES? PARTY AT MY PLACE... JUST BRING YOUR APPETITE...
DING DONG!
?!?
UH-OH...
—OOH! COMPANY!
C'MON IN, EVERYBODY!
?
!
(SHE FORGOT TO CLEAN UP)...
(SHE ALSO JUST INVITED KNUCKLES!)


SOON, THE PARTY WAS IN FULL SWING...
GOUDA CHEESE BALLS, ANY-ONE?
SUPERMODEL OF THE WORLD
—OOH! I LOVE THIS SONG!
..."YOU BETTER WORK!"
(GET AN EYEFULL OF OUR "SUPERMODEL" HOSTESS OVER THERE)...
(THAT ASS WOULD BE MORE AT HOME IN A BARN THAN ON A CAT-WALK)...
OH, HOW "MARTHA"!
HA!
KER-SPLASH
?!?
WHAT WAS THAT?
KNUCKLES! WHAT ARE YOU DOING IN THE PUNCH BOWL?!
I FELL!
HE-YUCK!
(WHO INVITED THAT THING?)
WHEN DID YOU GET HERE?
AND ARE YOU DRUNK AL-READY?
HE HAD ALL THE BEERS!
I'VE HAD A FEW BEERS...
HEY, I'M IN A FESTIVE MOOD!
IN FACT, I'D LIKE TO PROPOSE A TOAST...
...HERE'S TO THE LIBERATOR OF IRAQ: GEORGE W. BUSH!
WHAT?
(ANDRÉ, YOU'VE GOT TO GET KNUCKLES OUT OF HERE!)
ME? WHY ME?
AND DO WHAT WITH HIM?
I DON'T KNOW, AND I DON'T CARE! JUST GET RID OF HIM!
HMPF! WHAT'S IN IT FOR ME?
I'LL LET YOU BORROW MY DOLLY PARTON JUMPSUIT...
REALLY?
HERE, KNUCKLES! WE'RE GOING WALKIES!
WE ARE? OH BOY!
DON'T FORGET HIS LEASH...

HOURS LATER, LOVEY'S GUESTS HAVE COMMANDEERED THE CD PLAYER...
BOOM CHICKA BOOM CHICKA BOOM CHICKA BOOM...
THEY ALL SEEM TO REALLY BE INTO THIS TRIBAL, AMBIENT, DRUM AND BASS MUSIC...
OR IS IT "ACID INDUSTRIAL"? I FORGET...
YOU'RE ASKING ME?
I HATE TO SOUND PREJUDICED, BUT THIS "MUSIC" SUCKS BIG HAIRY MOOSECOCK!
WHY DO THEY LIKE THIS BORING, REPETITIVE SLOP, ANYWAY?
'CUZ THEY'RE ALL STONED, I GUESS...
IF THAT'S THE CASE THEN I'M GLAD POT IS ILLEGAL!
REMIND ME, NATALIE: WHY DID WE INVITE THESE PEOPLE INTO OUR HOME AGAIN?
BECAUSE THEY'RE COOL.
BURNING MAN
"COOL"? LOOK AT THEM! THAT ONE GUY'S EVEN TAKEN OVER KNUCKLES' SPOT IN THE PUNCH BOWL!
DIDN'T WE THROW OUT KNUCKLES FOR DOING THAT?
SO WE'RE HYPOCRITES! THERE'S NOTHING WE CAN DO ABOUT IT NOW...
SPEAK FOR YOURSELF!
I'M ABOUT TO SHAKE UP THIS OPIUM DEN!
?!? WHAT ARE YOU GONNA DO?
HEY, EVERYBODY! ARE YOU READY FOR SOME SPORTS JAMS?!
OH NO...
?
STADIUM ROCK
SOME WHAT?
WHO LET THE DOGS OUT? WOOF WOOF WOOF!
WOO-HOO!!
?
TELL ME THIS ISN'T HAPPENING...
MY BUZZ IS OFFICIALLY HARSHED...
HOW ABOUT THEM APPLES!
...AND OUR "REP" IS OFFICIALLY RUINED...



♫...HEY, MACARENA—HEE-YAH! ♫
OH, YEAH!
I LOVE THIS SONG!
DO THE MACARENA, EVERY-BODY!
GOOD GOD!
GET ME OUT OF HERE!
WOMEN AND CHILDREN FIRST!
HURRUMPF.
NICE GOING, LOVEY...
I THOUGHT YOU WANTED TO LIVEN UP THE PARTY, NOT KILL IT!
?!? WHERE DID EVERY-ONE GO?
DID THEY ALL FORGET HOW TO DO THE MACARENA?
I DOUBT THEY EVER DID, BUT WHO CARES?
GOOD RIDDENCE TO BAD RUBBISH, I SAY!
YOU SAID IT, SISTER!
—OH NO! BUT WHAT ABOUT KNUCKLES AND ANDRE?
WE KICKED OUT OUR BEST FRIENDS ALL FOR THE SAKE OF A BUNCH OF JERKY-HEADS!
=GASP!= THAT'S RIGHT!
WE'VE GOT TO GO FIND THEM!
HOURS LATER...
WHERE COULD THEY BE, LOVEY?
WE'VE CHECKED EVERY BAR IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD!
ALL EXCEPT THIS TRANSVEST-ITE HANG-OUT THAT ANDRE LIKES TO GO TO...
KARAOKE NIGHT FRIDAY 8-11
SORRY, WE'RE OPEN
BAR
BUT THERE'S NO WAY THAT—
♫...AIN'T NO MOUNTAIN HIGH ENOUGH...♫
?!? THAT SOUNDS LIKE...
...KNUCKLES?

ANDRÉ! WHERE'S KNUCKLES!
WHO? OH, HIM...
HE'S BACK BY THE KARAOKE MACHINE...
HE'S BEEN SINGING DUETS ALL NIGHT...
THE QUEENS ARE ALL VERY IMPRESSED WITH HIS NICK ASHFORD IMITATION...
♫ ...BUT NOW WE'RE SOLID...
...SOLID AS A ROCK!
OH MY GOD!
I DON'T BELIEVE IT!
HOW DID YOU EVEN CONVINCE HIM TO COME TO THIS PLACE?
WE COMPROMISED. HE AGREED AS LONG AS HE COULD WATCH SPORTS ON T.V...
BUT THE ONLY "SPORT" WE COULD FIND ON THIS LATE IS THIS WOMEN'S CURLING MATCH BETWEEN ICELAND AND ESTONIA...
SO KNUCKLES WANDERED OFF OUT OF BOREDOM, BUT I'VE BECOME COMPLETELY TRANSFIXED BY THIS GAME! IT'S POETRY IN MOTION!
AND I LOVE THEIR CUTE LITTLE UNIFORMS!
SWEEP! SWEEP! SWEEP!
—OOH! NICE COMEBACK BY THE ESTONIANS!
THAT'S, UH, REALLY TERRIFIC, ANDRÉ...
?
HEY! DID YOU GALS HEAR ME KARAOKE-ING?
THEY SAY I'VE GOT A GREAT SET O' PIPES!
THIS IS MY NEW FAVORITE HANG-OUT!
(SO, WHADAYA THINK, LOVEY?)
(ARE WE DOOMED TO ASSOCIATE WITH THESE FREAKS AND LOSERS FOREVER?)
HEY! SPEAK FOR YOURSELF!
...'CUZ THESE FREAKS AND LOSERS HAPPEN TO BE MY PEOPLE!
OOH! ICELAND JUST REGAINED THE LEAD!
HERE'S TO THE LIBERATOR OF AFGHANISTAN: GEORGE W. BUSH!
HERE! HERE!
END!

Brought
to you
by
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